"HEARTS OF BLACK," A STORY OF AARON BURR, BEGINS NEXT WEEK

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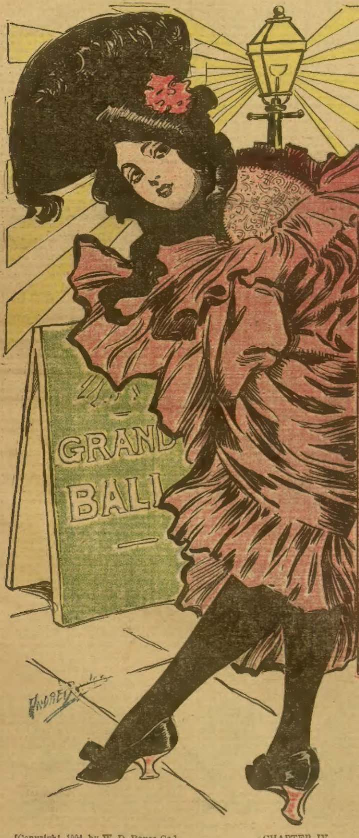
QUEEN OF THE LOVE-RED ROSE

OR

MIGNON'S TRAGIC CAREER - - - - By Constance Beatrice Willard.



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CHAPTER IV.

"The lesson of the love-red rose."

Mignon was entering upon an entirely new existence, and so thoroughly enjoying herself that each morning, as she dressed, she would smile at the charming face which was reflected in her mirror, and ask:

"Is it really you, little country girl, who is having such a good time, and succeeding as you never dreamed of doing?"

Yes, she was succeeding, for Mr. Chatterton paid her twenty dollars a week, and, to his surprise, found that she earned every cent of her salary, for Mignon was an excellent stenographer, and thoroughly competent and trustworthy. He had expected to hire the greater portion of his work done outside, but was astonished to find her able to take care of everything, and he was a man of many interests and a large practice.

Little by little he was dropping his poison in her young ears. Each day she found a fresh bunch of American Beauties on her desk; he loaded her down with confections, books, and theater tickets, insisting upon her spending each Saturday afternoon at one or other of the leading theaters, and many times taking her to drive in the dewy evenings, when the rich harvest moon gazed down sadly and tried to warn the unprotected girl against the wiles of a man who, master in his art, had summoned to his aid all the allurements his experience, personal attractions and unbounded wealth commanded.

So passed August and September, and the year was well into October before he took any decided action, although he had accustomed her to slight familiarities. In passing her desk he often laid his hand caressingly upon her fluffy hair, or when she had finished taking his letters he would put his hand over hers which had so nimbly followed his words and say, half-laughingly:

"Such little fingers, and yet so powerful!" And once when she had laughingly replied: "Not powerful; only quick to move," he had answered, with a well-simulated break in his voice, which had always proved effective:

"Powerful, little Rose," for so he generally called her when they were alone, "for they hold a great deal in their grasp," but, to his own surprise, he had not ventured more, she seemed so hedged about with a maiden innocence, which was still more attractive than an accommodating knowingness.

One day the wind was blowing from the lake and the streets looked uncomfortable, so that when lunch time arrived, particularly as they had a large amount of work to finish, Chatterton sent out for their lunch and he thought she had never looked lovelier than she did as she worked and ate together, her face flushed, her hair slightly rumpled, laughing at the unusual proceeding. At last the tiresome testimony was copied, the last page was taken from the machine, and as he drew down the curtains he said softly:

"We are all through, so we can have a few minutes to chat, my Rose. Tell me what you are thinking about," and he drew near to Mignon, who was putting away her papers.

The sensitive lips quivered. There was something new in the man's voice, and to hide her confusion she said, hastily:

"I was thinking of the case we have been working upon. How can that woman ask for a divorce? Such things seem terrible to me."

For a moment Chatterton was turned from his purpose, but no; he only deferred it for a moment.

"It is doubly strange in her case, for Thompson has treated her like a queen. Of course he is a common, money-making grub, but he has spent everything upon her lavishly. I think there is something behind it all."

"What?" Mignon asked, raising her eyes to his.

"Another man in the case, I believe."

"She has fallen in love with a man, and she a married woman?" Mignon cried, her face pale with horror.

"Oh, there are different ways of looking at it, you know, my little country Rose. But I do not want to talk of her—great yellow-haired thing she is! I want to talk of something more pleasant; can you guess what?"

The blood was slowly rising to her temples. She felt a curious constriction of the heart, and there was a slight roaring in her ears. A subtle something was in the air.

With a smile on his face Chatterton crossed to her and said, softly:

"Say, Rosie, remember what I told you the first day you came here?"

"About what?" she asked, trembling under his ardent gaze.

"The roses. I have given you only American Beauties, but now," taking those from the vase on her desk and tossing them in the waste basket, "I am going to give you some others and teach you what they mean," and going to his private vault he took out a florist's box and, opening it, let fall upon the desk a great shower of matchless Jacqueminot roses.

"These are the roses suited to my matchless one. Look, dear," taking one in his white hands, against which the black red petals looked like blood, "at the velvety surface of the outside petal; see how it matches the flush on your sweet face." His arm had slipped about her waist, and his face was very near hers. "Within it lies concealed from the world, as yet, the deep, matchless perfume of the rose, the flower of love. Darling, look at me, look into my eyes, and see what you read there," suddenly dropping the flower and placing his other hand beneath her chin.

The roaring was very loud now, and his words sounded from afar. The innocent eyes raised and caught the reflection from the glowing ones above. Never again would Mignon McKinzie look out upon the world as she had done. Her eyes had gazed upon the fire of passion burning in the heart of a world-hardened man. The perfume of the roses was overpowering. She felt faint and her breath came heavily.

"Mignon, my darling little rose, answer me—what do you see in my eyes? Do you see a love so overpowering that it would commit any crime to possess you? Do you see a love which overleaps every obstacle? Can you read in my eyes my devotion to you? If not, will this convince you of my adoration of you?" and he caught her to his heart and rained mad kisses upon the soft face and beautiful lips, which quivered under his caresses and finally responded to them, tenderly, yet timidly, for she was frightened as well as fascinated.

Realizing this, Chatterton controlled himself and, holding her back, said gaily, although there was a real quiver in his voice this time:

"Then you do love me? You have learned the lesson of my love-red roses?"

For a moment the girl hesitated, striving to find words to express her love and gratitude; then she held up her face to him, saying softly:

"I think I do," and he gloried as he felt the tender pressure of her lips, for he knew that he, and not Gordon, had received the first kiss from the young girl.

Smiling down at her, he placed a rose in her glorious hair, and then, gathering the others together, he said, joyously:

"Bury your face in these, darling. Draw their perfume from them and intoxicate yourself with their sweetness. So shall we take from the world every atom of pleasure and live but to make our lives one long song of luxurious delight."

CHAPTER V.

"But I love as only my nature can
With a love that makes heaven or hell for man."

It would be difficult to describe Mignon's feelings at this moment. In spite of the happiness which surged over her like a great wave; notwithstanding her youth and inexperience, there was something missing in the ardent wooing of the man. Her senses were appealed to, and yet she felt that was not necessary. Had he simply said, "I love you, dear," she would have been better satisfied. Not for nothing had she learned the lessons of high spiritual living and purity of thought and action in the little church, where several times a month a traveling preacher had held services, nor from her well-worn Bible, which had been her mother's.

She loved the man, or her valuation of him, with all the strength of her young, untarnished heart, but her better nature was slightly shocked by his effusive words, although she could scarcely give a name to her feeling.

When he concluded his glowing description she quietly said:

"You offer me too much. I have nothing to bestow in return."

Freeman laughed joyously, and looked lovingly at the exquisite girl, whose beauty was almost beyond belief, now that the love-light had been kindled in her eyes and its reflection glowed about her tender mouth.

"I! Why, darling, I offer you nothing. You give me your priceless self. You shall never regret it, I swear it."

"You give me nothing? Why, how can you say that? You take the little ignorant country girl, unlearned and childish, and you, one of the great men of this wonderful city, make her your wife; is that nothing?" and the sweet, unclouded eyes again were lifted to the deceitful face above. The critical moment had arrived. Freeman Chatterton seated himself in his great, easy office-chair and drew the slender figure to his lap. His face had assumed a serious expression, and he said, tenderly:

"Sweetheart, I am now going to put your love to a great test. You do love me?"

"Indeed I do," was the quick answer, accompanied with an entrancing blush.

"Many women would blanch at the trial, but I trust you, darling. I know you will not fail me."

"Put me to the test, and you will not find me wanting," Mignon said eagerly.

As he looked at the lovely face before him Chatterton felt for a moment a pang of remorse. The girl was so confiding, so helpless. Then he said in the voice which ever moved so deeply:

"Mignon, I am a peculiar man. Although an exponent of the law, there are many of its customs that I rebel against. There is nothing more unsatisfactory than the laws which hedge the marriage ceremony."

The girl started slightly and looked into his face.

"I do not want a slave, bound to me by time-rotted and wornout laws; one forced by her vows to love and honor me. I want a partner, with whom life is one long dream of happiness; I want a sweetheart whose every breath is given for me because she loves, and not because she is bound to me."

Mignon rose slowly. Her face was deadly pale, and she moistened her lips nervously.

"What is it, dear, don't you understand me?" Chatterton cried, holding out his arms longingly.

"No, I do not understand," Mignon replied, her eyes haunted now and her lips trembling. "I am just a simple country girl, Mr. Chatterton, and not used to so many fine words. To me there are two ways of living. People either get married or are utterly bad. What are you trying to say to me?"

"That I love you, precious little jewel, and want to make you happy."

A pair of clear eyes pierced his very soul, and a clear voice cried:

"And how do you propose to do that?"

"I will surround you with everything that wealth can buy. You shall have a lovely home, crowned with flowers, all your own, where I will come whenever you wish. You shall be clothed with rich garments, and your lovely hands shall hang heavy with costly jewels. No sorrow or misery will come near you, and when you drive out in your carriage you will be the envied of women, and I of men. I will give you a love, unbounded and unchanging, which will teach you new lessons in the glory and luxury of living each day, until life will be a very paradise."

Mignon stood with her hand to her ears.

"Stop!" she cried. "In all this luxury of living, what position will I occupy in the world? What relation will I bear to you?"

"You will be my darling, my best beloved, my own Rose and queen among women."

Poor, stricken girl, standing there before him, her eyes leaden, her cheeks blanched, and lines about the mouth which now traced a vivid line on the young face!

The man was touched beyond his own understanding.

"Come, darling," he whispered, holding out his arms.

"To be what?" she asked, raising her head proudly.

"My darling."

She moved back a pace or two; then she said, gravely:

"Mr. Chatterton, among girls reared as I have been, there is only one title a woman can wear with honor if she gives herself to a man, and that is wife. Until you bestow it upon me I can only be a stranger to you."

"Is that all, love? Well, you shall be my little wife in the sight of God," and once more he advanced hastily toward her, but she retreated.

"Before me, also?" she queried.

"Frankly, no," was the abrupt answer.

A shiver went over the slender figure; then, with a quickness of action which astonished him, Mignon caught up her hat and jacket and, with her hand upon the knob, said firmly:

"Then we shall always be strangers," and she vanished with the last words through the door.

Chatterton did not seek to follow her, but sat thinking, his head upon his hand. When he finally roused himself there was an ugly expression about his mouth, and his eyes glittered.

"I will conquer if I have to break her heart to do it," he muttered, as he brushed the great heap of roses into the waste basket and left the office.

CHAPTER VI.

"How can I wait, oh, love!
Until you come again?"

Mrs. Thompson had been as good as her word. She did not forget Gordon's bravery, but insisted upon his calling upon her, and when he did so, easily drew from him his ambitions. As the wife of Barton Thompson she had great power, and her recommendation secured Gordon an excellent position with one of the leading newspapers of the city, where he rapidly made himself felt as a forcible and fluent writer and a man upon whom entire dependence could be placed. His editor knew that if he were sent to "chase" up an event he would fathom the matter to the very bottom, and not spend the evening at the theater and then return to "manufacture copy" at his office.

The young man was delighted with his new life, although he was not satisfied about Mignon. He had written several times to her brother Jacob, but received unsatisfactory replies. Jacob had much to say about crops, and the girl he was "keeping company with," but all he thought necessary to say about his sister was that she was well and doing well for herself.

At last, one afternoon in September, he disregarded her wishes and went to the firm whose employ she had entered. Handing in his card, bearing the name of the paper he represented, he was admitted to the presence of John T. Digby, for the whole management was strongly Republican and interested in standing well with the representatives of the party in the newspaper world.

When Mr. Digby learned that Gordon had come upon a personal matter he cooled somewhat, and was returning to his usual gruff manner of speech when Mr. Thompson came into the room. Although worn by his domestic troubles, Barton Thompson never allowed them to interfere with outside matters. He felt very grateful to Gordon for saving his wife's life, although she was striving to free herself, a matter of which Gordon was, however, uninformed. Recognizing the young newspaper man, he advanced cordially and shook him by the hand in the way which had won him unlimited friends. That sealed Gordon to Digby, for the latter always followed in his superior's lead.

"And Mrs. Thompson is well, I trust?" Gordon asked courteously, and wondered at the sad expression which came into the great man's eyes as he answered quietly:

"Quite well. She is out of town at present. Are you here to get our views on national issues?"

"Not today," Gordon replied quietly, "but to ask a few questions on my own account. In July a friend of mine came into the city to work for you as a stenographer. Her name is Mignon McKinzie. Your manager here tells me she is not with you now."

"Is that so? Too bad! But probably Digby has her address," Mr. Thompson said easily.

Digby squirmed. "No, I haven't," he acknowledged. "She said she had another place, and left without notice in the middle of the day. If you would like I will ask among my girls and very likely discover either her boarding place, which I believe you do not know, or where she is working. Girls always brag of such things to each other."

"Miss McKinzie would scarcely brag," Gordon said coolly. Digby's manner in the first instance had angered him.

"Well, you know what I mean—talk it over. They always do. Girls are all alike," and he chuckled in a disagreeable manner.

Gordon thought of his pure, sweet Mignon, looked at the girls about the office, and then did not agree with the corpulent manager.

"Yes, inquire into the matter, and communicate with Mr. Wainwright at his office," Thompson said, then added: "Going to lunch? I am; come with me," and he walked off with the young reporter, leaving the office agape, for Thompson was too powerful a man to spend his time heedlessly.

Maddened with rage that he could not furnish the desired information, Digby canvassed the office thoroughly, and was not able to discover a single bit of definite information. The men all spoke kindly of the gentle girl who had labored earnestly and conscientiously, and several were quite enthusiastic. The girls told a different story, one saying:

"That tony thing? Well, I guess not. She was too sly to tell anything," while another suggested that she didn't think for her part that the girl was nearly so green as she seemed, but was sure she was working for "all there was in it."

This latter remark Digby knew from personal experience was a vile slander, and realizing that Mignon was not an ordinary stenographer, but a girl with friends behind her, he angrily rebuked her traducer, telling her not to judge every one by herself, and continued his endeavors, but with no result. Mignon had completely vanished, and it was with a heavy spirit that he called the expectant Gordon up about five that afternoon.

"This Mr. Wainwright?"

"Yes, Mr. Wainwright, hello! I've been talking with my people."

"No trouble at all—glad to do it."

"Yes, on your account and Miss McKinzie's, too, for she was an excellent worker, and a very nice girl."

"Why, no offense meant."

"Yes, the news. Well, Mr. Wainwright, I am damned sorry, but so far I can't find a trace of her."

"Yes, I know you feel it—so do I, but you see a man like me, with so much on his hands, really does not go into the private history of his employes. What did you say? Oh, you thought we kept their names and addresses. Well, so we do, usually, but I believe hers was not put down through some oversight."

"Keep on looking? Of course I will. If it were a man I wanted to find it would be different, you know, but you see I do not care to pry into the life of a girl—it might offend, you know, and I always guard my girls. Yes, I will continue my search."

"Oh, no thanks are required. A friend of Mr. Thompson is a friend of mine, you know."

"Oh, yes, but I know which way the wind blows, you know, but I will keep on looking, and we'll find her, of course we will."

"Good-by! good-by!" But as he hung up his receiver the usually rubicund face was bloodless and he muttered to himself:

"In God's name, I wonder where that damned girl did rush off to, anyway. Took him to lunch! Humph! that young sprig is worth keeping a line on; Thompson is a man who never wastes friendships. Wonder if it's true that Mrs. T. is cutting up rough and trying to get a divorce? She's a fool if she is. Damn it, where is that girl?" and with this the manager slammed down his desk, swore at both office boys, yelled several directions to his different assistants and stamped out of his office, feeling more uncomfortable than he had in a long time, while poor Gordon was writing a personal which appeared for a long time in every paper in Chicago:

"Wanted, information regarding M. McK. Love versus career; verdict, platonic friendship." But the months passed, and no answer came.

CHAPTER VII.

"Innocent, and yet branded with the shame of love."

Mignon sat wearily in a fireless room, early in March. Her face was thin and her eyes sunken, but the spirit within burned bravely, although she had been sadly discouraged. Expert as she was, she had experienced nothing but failure ever since she had closed the door on temptation, left the room glowing with warmth and love and gone out into the loneliness of the cold October night. The reason for this she did not comprehend, for in spite of her unhappy experience she could not conceive of the fiendish ingenuity which pursued her. Time after time had she secured a place, only to be told in a day or two that her services were not desired. At first she had thought it was lack of references, but finally she realized that there was something back of all this, and had demanded that very day a more definite reason when for the twelfth time she had been told:

"Sorry, Miss McKinzie, but I think you will have to leave."

When she had made her request the man had hesitated, turned over his papers nervously, and finally said in an embarrassed way:

"I have to be careful whom I employ."

"Well, what have I done to make you be careful about me?" poor Mignon sobbed. "I am poor, but that's no disgrace, I am sure."

"My dear Miss McKinzie," he said, still more nervously, "I am not judging you. Of course, I realize that you are paying a big price, and I am sure that the man's to blame, but my sisters work here, and I simply cannot let you stay where they will associate with you."

Mignon looked in simple amazement. She well knew his sisters, loud-speaking women of uncertain age, whose inclinations to flirt with any one from the office boy to a chance acquaintance on the street, had impressed itself upon her in the week she had been working beside them.

"But what is it I am paying a big price for—my career? But there is no disgrace about that."

Once more the man laughed nervously, and there was a tinge of admiration in his voice as he said:

"Well, you play the innocent about as well as any one I ever knew. Of course I supposed you would deny it, but I never dreamed you could do it so well. Come, now, be off and don't make any more fuss."

Still she persisted. "I will know why you are discharging me," but when he said with a peculiar smile on his face: "Well, come to dinner with me and I will tell you," she was frightened, and left without another word, although she still wondered why she appeared disgraced, and did not understand the meaning of his words. Her purity of soul simply told her that he meant her no good.

Sitting there in the little room, to which she had come by several degrees from the handsome apartment she had occupied while in Chatterton's office, she reviewed her life in the city, and the tears fell rapidly.

Instinctively her thoughts turned to the country home, and she wondered about her people. Even the neighbors came in for a share of her attention, and she smiled drearily as she remembered funny little incidents of what had seemed such a commonplace life. Yes, it had been sadly commonplace, but oh, how sheltered! She was seventeen now, her birthday had passed during December, and there were doubtless many years before her; but how could she pass them? Then she looked at the little hand, now so thin, and said dreamily:

"If I keep up my present diet probably there will not be so many after all," and she wondered at the strange emptiness within, although there was no need to do so, as the poor girl had had nothing to eat for thirty-six hours. Yes, the time had come when she was down to her last cent, for she had not waited to take her salary when leaving that day the place where she felt she was so cruelly insulted. Her generous balance in the bank had been spent during the long months when she had practically earned nothing, and she owed her landlady for two weeks' lodging.

A week before, just before she had obtained the employment she thought would do so much for her, she had written a simple little letter to her father.

"Dear father and home folks," it had begun, "I have been sick and forced to go without working. Really, dear ones, I feel I am too young to live alone in so big a city. May I come home and try to get work somewhere near you? I am sad and lonely, and I do need my father's and brother's protection. Think, I am only seventeen! If you will let me come, please send me enough money for my trip home, and to pay my landlady. I can make ten dollars do. Your loving daughter and sister,

"MIGNON."

As yet no answer had come, although there had been plenty of time, but as she sat there trying to solve her life problem, the landlady opened the door and tossed her a letter. The girl opened it, read its few lines, then staggered to a seat. Now she knew of what she was so unjustly accused. The woman stood looking at her scornfully, and then said:

"So that's the letter you said would bring you money?"

"Yes," Mignon moaned.

"Don't bring no money as I can see?" with a hard inflection in her voice.

"No, but I will earn the money to pay you," Mignon said. "I am so mortified to keep you waiting."

The woman laughed coarsely. "You must think me an easy one. As long as there was any hope of any money I held my tongue, but now, out you go. This is a respectable house, and I won't have any such baggage as you in it another moment."

"Now?" Mignon asked, shivering as she thought of the rain-drenched streets.

"Oh, girls like you can always find a place to go, don't tell me! Here, get on your things and get out," and, half deadened with pain and hunger, Mignon complied.

"I'll keep your rags until you can pay me—that is, if you do it soon," she continued, shoving the girl's trunk into a corner, and so, friendless, hopeless, branded by her nearest of kin with a shame not her own, little Mignon, defenseless and alone, went out into the Chicago streets, filled on every side with so many pitfalls.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Love betrayed into passion is a vicious thing."

The wind whistled about the McKinzie homestead several nights prior to Mignon's receipt of the letter which affected her so deeply, and the family was gathered in the big kitchen, where the only fire in the house was in the cook stove. The table, pushed against the wall, along which was a bench for the younger members of the family, was surrounded with the old and young, each engaged in a different pursuit.

With her glasses resting on the end of her rather long nose, Mignon's stepmother, the third Mrs. McKinzie, was mending, her horny fingers moving nimbly as she listened to her husband reading in his high, nasal voice, with its burr brought from the Highlands of bonnie Scotland when he emigrated nearly forty years ago, the weekly newspaper.

Jacob was very near the stove, greasing his boots, for he was going to be married in a few days and take up his residence on a farm of his father's, several miles nearer town. This he would work on shares until he had accumulated sufficient to make a payment on it or another farm. He had been deterred from entering his new life by the sickness of his prospective bride, but he had already begun plowing and had everything well under hand.

The younger children were struggling with their lessons, but keeping remarkably still, for no noise was tolerated.

Another half-brother of Mignon's, John, whose time was not yet up, was looking with longing eyes at Jacob, and exchanging a hasty whisper with him now and then.

On and on went the tiresome voice, reading the bits of local news, and the wind sighed and mourned in the larches outside.

At last the paper was exhausted, and Reuben took off his horn-bowed glasses. His wife yawned and began to roll up her sewing. The clock pointed to half-past eight, a late hour with them, as both usually retired at eight.

Released from a rather oppressive silence, Jacob said, after clearing his throat several times:

"I say, father." The old man turned. "What are you going to do about sister's letter?"

Mrs. McKinzie turned down the corners of her mouth.

Reuben shifted one leg over the other and tugged at his sparse red beard.

"I think we ought to say something, and if you'll send the money, Delia and I will let her stay with us," he continued nervously.

"Ten dollars is a bit of money," the father said slowly.

"Indeed it is, and how she thinks we'd be having that much tossing about is more than I see," snapped his wife, jabbing her needle in and out of her apron.

"I'd send it to her if it wasn't just now," Jacob continued, nervously.

"So'd I if I had any," chimed in John, eagerly, for to these two the dainty little half-sister had been a revelation.

"I'm thinking it ower, but one maist be careful," Reuben continued slowly. He loved his daughter, but he was very thrifty, and ten dollars was a big amount where each cent was wrung from the soil and came into the treasury in such small numbers at a time. Having no rent to pay nor food to buy, the farmer can scarcely understand the needs of city life, nor does he realize that he is much richer because he always has a shelter and plenty of food, even if his pocket be empty.

"That girl isn't your only child," his wife broke in. She was opposed utterly and entirely either to sending the money or allowing Mignon to return.

"We will take the matter to the Lord in prayer," the father concluded, and clumsily crossing the room took the family Bible from the shelf, when a knock sounded on the kitchen door.

"Come in," he cried hospitably, returning to his seat, still carrying his Bible.

As the door opened he looked his welcome, and his wife hastened forward with:

"Well, I declare, Squire Nichols! You are late. Howdy, anyway?"

The good squire was afflicted with asthma so badly that speaking was difficult, which ailment explained the reason why, in the matter of voice, he was not the person best suited to read the Declaration of Independence, although he was always chosen.

After he had been helped in the house and unrolled from his various wrappings, including an old shepherd plaid shawl, he gasped out that he had been coming past the store and so he had brought their mail with him.

This was greeted with joy, for no one had been for the mail during the past couple of days. The mail consisted of one letter addressed to "Reuben McKinzie, Esq."

The horn-bowed glasses were adjusted carefully, and the old man drew closer to the dim oil lamp which burned on the table as a concession to his failing eyesight. Until within the past year or two a tallow dip made by his wife afforded all the necessary light.

They all gathered about curiously, including the Squire. With exasperating slowness the gnarled old fingers fumbled with the envelope, and finally he had to take his wife's shears and carefully cut open the end. Eager whispers were exchanged, for the writing was unknown to them all.

At last he drew out a sheet of heavy white paper and slowly read down the page, turned it over, blundered at the way it was written, and finally discovered that the last page came after the first, and that the third began at one side of the under portion of the first page and ran across to the bottom of the last. A variety of expressions chased over his furrowed old face, but his lips grew tense, then he said in a voice none of them recognized:

"Jacob, my eldest born, read this out loud and see if my old eyes have deceived me, or if shame has fallen upon our house," and with trembling fingers and faltering voice Jacob read the clear, bold chirography:

"Reuben McKinzie, Esq.—Honored Sir: You do not know me, but I have heard of your honesty and upright living, and so I write you that you may banish from your love and home one who bears your name."

"Land o' Goshen! Who's that?" John cried, but Jacob continued:

"Your daughter has disgraced herself and her family, and is numbered among the lost women of Chicago. No decent business house will employ her, and she nightly prowls the streets, seeking whom she may devour. ONE WHO KNOWS."

"It's a lie—a damned lie!" Jacob cried, dashing the paper to the ground, uttering his first oath.

The old man tossed his hands above his head, crying:

"And another child sins against the will of God," while John secretly hugged himself, resolving to copy his brother's example some time when he was far away from home.

"I am not at all surprised," came primly from the set lips of Mrs. McKinzie, who was really and truly sorry and astounded, but who spoke more from the lips than the heart.

The Squire could only wheeze and gasp and feel as though the world was tumbling about his head, for he, with the whole neighborhood, loved Mignon.

The father turned toward his son.

"It is only too true. I know it. First, Jacob, though, if I ever hear you using such fearsome language again, boy, I will rawhide ye, twenty-one or forty-one." Then he turned to the others, and, laying his hand, now trembling like a leaf, upon the Bible, said in tones of thunder:

"Our house has been defiled. Mine own flesh and blood has become a scarlet woman. By her own transgressions has she put herself beyond forgiveness either human or Divine. From now on she is dead to us—utterly dead. Hear that, Squire—you as an officer of the law. I cast her off forever, the vile wanton who has sold the flesh which came of my own loins to be an abomination unto the most high God. I cast her off, and so do we all."

The man paused for breath, clutching at his throat, when Jacob sprang forward and said bravely, for he had been reared to fear this stern, upright and thoroughly moral parent:

"I won't cast her off, father. I'm an American, free-born and twenty-one years of age, and I say that whenever my sister wants to come back her place is in my home."

"Are ye mad, boy?" cried the father.

"No, only just. Gordon told me we ought not to allow her to go there all by herself—poor little thing!—and I see he was right, If she has fallen the blame rests upon us—upon me, at any rate—and I will bear my part of the blame."

"Delia won't let you do it," cried his stepmother, exultantly.

"Then she can look for another man. I will be master in my own house. Father, if you cast Mignon forth, I go too. If she is forbidden this house, so am I. If she is without the pale of your love, I shall accept nothing of you, and you can find another farmer for your place."

The father turned away from the resolute young face and said in a low voice:

"What is written is written. My curse is on her and cannot be recalled, but not on you, my first-born—not on you. I cannot give—you——" then he staggered and would have fallen had not Jacob caught him in his strong young arms, but the last words Reuben McKinzie was ever to utter were spoken, and before morning life had fled. Before his body was cold the stepmother wrote the letter which nearly broke the heart of poor Mignon.

"We have been told as how you are a wicked, scarlet woman, and live by doing wicked. Your father is dead. It killed him to hear this, and he died cursing you. He said you could never come home. No more now from, respectfully,

"MRS. REUBEN M'KINZIE."

In next week's issue of the Ledger another installment of this captivating story will be offered the reader. Each subscription to the Ledger calls for a free camera or patterns as the subscriber may choose. See our announcement on pages thirteen and fifteen.

Turning the Tables.

Jones—Brown has met with serious reverses recently, I am told.

Smith—So? How much did he lose?

Jones—Only his freedom. He got married.

Smith—But where do the reverses come in?

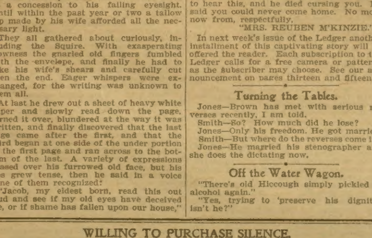
Jones—He married his stenographer and she does the dictating now.

Off the Water Wagon.

"There's old Hiccough simply pickled in alcohol again."

"Yes, trying to 'preserve his dignity,' isn't he?"

WILLING TO PURCHASE SILENCE.



"I have now completely hypnotized the lady," said the performer, "and she will not be able to say a word until I snap my fingers."

"Look here, Professor," broke in the husband of the subject, "I'll be willing to give you a fair price if you promise not to snap your fingers for a week."

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1904

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The White-Plumed Knight.

BY WILLIAM L. COLBY.

Bold, handsome and generous was the young Reginald De Bracy. Possessed of every knightly accomplishment, it was little wonder that he soon won the love of the beautiful Blanche Faulconbridge, who was called the fairest lady in all England, in those old feudal times.

Only one man in the land bore ill will toward Sir Reginald De Bracy. Rent with the fiercest pangs of jealousy, he had vowed a terrible vengeance against the favored suitor, and the forthcoming tournament seemed to afford a good chance for the fulfillment of his vow.

At this tournament, which was to be held in a few days, one of the events was to be a grand tilt between two parties of knights, each being twelve in number. The peculiar feature of this was that each knight was to preserve a strict incognito till the end of the match, all coats-of-arms being rigorously excluded, and the two parties to be distinguished from each other solely by the color of their plumes; those of one side being red, and the others white. And this arrangement suggested to the mind of Richard Langley a plan which, if successful, would rid him forever of his hated rival, Reginald De Bracy.

The knights for each side had already been chosen, both himself and his rival belonging to the white-plumed knights, and it had also come to his knowledge that a certain knight of the opposite side was held absent by sickness.

And so it came to pass that, on the morning of the tournament, word was spread that the missing knight, Herbert De Vaux, had recovered and arrived at the grounds, ready for the fight. A powerful-looking man, his face concealed by his armor, stood in the doorway of De Vaux's tent, and was supposed by everybody to be that individual himself. But this man was in reality a burly ruffian, a tool of Langley's, with instructions to do his utmost to put an end to the life of De Bracy in the fight about to ensue.

He was in reality more skillful with his weapons than any of the knights there assembled, but prevented by his low rank from taking part in any knightly exercise.

As the time for the tournament approached, the knights were assembled in a large inclosure within the lists, De Bracy being among them, little dreaming of the deep-laid plot planned against him. Standing a little apart from the company were the two plotters.

"Note closely the white plume worn by De Bracy," said Langley, in a low tone. "Seest thou not, Bertram, a small particle of red in the upper part? Much risk have I run in placing it there, and remember, when the combat comes, fail not in striking to the death the knight thus marked."

"Ay, master, trust me for that," Bertram replied, and the pair separated.

Meanwhile, Sir Reginald, unsuspicious of danger, was chatting gaily with his betrothed, who was leaning forward from the pavilion above.

"Take good care of thyself, Reginald," she was saying, "for if you encounter any danger, you may be assured that there will be at least one pale face among the spectators."

Then she laughed gaily, but suddenly checked herself. Her keen eye had seen the red particle in her lover's plume, and with quick wit she at once divined that it was placed there as a distinguishing mark. Little suspecting the terrible mission that trifle was destined to fulfill, she reached down her shapely hand and managed to detach it from the plume without being observed. Then a strange fancy came into her mind—a wish to foil the designs of the unknown person who had thus marked her lover—and bending over she fastened it firmly to the plume of another knight standing just below her, under the pretense of curling the stranger's plume more gracefully.

But suddenly the trumpet sounded, and each knight betook himself to his station, ready for the coming conflict. Then another trumpet blast burst forth, causing the hearts of all to beat fast with anticipation, and with slow and majestic tread the combatants moved into the lists, each at an opposite end. Splendidly mounted, clad in complete armor, and with a sea of waving plumes above their heads, they afforded a truly magnificent spectacle. And then a third blast.

A thundering of hoofs, a clashing of steel, and the two plumed lines mere merged in one. It was a glorious fight, and the hearts of the spectators throbbed madly with excitement as they beheld. Bravely each gallant knight held his part, and the contest seemed almost equal.

In the thickest of the fight was the low-born ruffian, Bertram, overwhelming the white-plumed knights, one after another, with his ponderous blows, and all the time searching eagerly for his prey—a knight with a red spot on his plume.

At last he saw one bearing this mark, and, forcing his way through the contestants, was soon by his side. One terrific blow of his battle ax, and the doomed knight, with a crushed skull, lay bleeding on the sod.

With a thrill of exultation he felt that he had fulfilled his promise, and done to death the noble young knight, De Bracy. But hardly had he delivered the blow when a white-plumed knight swept up behind him, and with a ponderous stroke of his sword felled him from his horse, where he lay stunned beside his victim.

Throwing himself from his horse, the conqueror placed his foot on Bertram's neck, crying to him to yield.

But at that moment the King, taking pity on the brave knights, many of whom were disabled, and on those of the white plume, who seemed to be losing the day, threw down his warder, and the combat ended.

Then, as was previously agreed to, each knight, without changing his position, removed his helmet and displayed his identity to the anxious crowd.

And he who had struck down Bertram, removing his helmet, displayed the features of Reginald De Bracy.

The one who had plotted for his death, too, had fallen a victim to his own vile plans, for on removing the helmet from the head of him whom Bertram had killed, the features of Sir Richard Langley were exposed.

And Bertram, after recovering consciousness, and being questioned in regard to his disguise, was forced to confess the whole plot and received the punishment he so richly deserved, while Reginald lived to wed the lovely Blanche, whose simple action had saved him from death.

Pointed Paragraphs.

There are plug horses, plug hats and plug men.

Food for thought is to be found in empty cupboards.

Next door neighbors can pick flaws in the perfect man.

No woman looks as good to others as she does to herself.

It is hard work for a man to find another man who is easy to work.

Liquor drowns sorrows almost as quickly as fresh water will drown a fish.

A MAN OF MYSTERY;

OR

WHO WAS BETRAYED

By Colonel Prentiss Ingraham.

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CHAPTER XIII.

PATRIOTS IN COUNCIL.

When Lark Lawless left the hospitable mansion of Major Warder, after that interview with Miss St. Orme which had so unexpected a termination, one thought alone was in his mind. He was lost!

Coralie St. Orme, it was certain, knew everything. She had, somehow, become cognizant of what had passed at Lovers' Leap, and she would have no pity. Not only had his dream of achieving a fortune by marrying the Major's niece vanished, but he felt that that young lady intended to denounce him as the murderer of Anne Molyneux. He believed that he had read that much in her eyes.

Then a momentary relief came to him.

She had not acted promptly in the matter. She was waiting for something.

It mattered not what it was, it might mean salvation to him. Cora might delay, but he must act, and at once.

A meeting of extremists, with whom Lawless had professed to be only partially in sympathy, was being held that night, and toward the hall of the Nationalists he bent his steps. He well knew that among them he could find a willing tool for any work he might have on hand, provided the business paid.

The first to accost him when he entered was Polinski.

In his present mood, Lark felt like shaking the old man off, but he remembered that—the Warder thousands having vanished—this was his last possible Eldorado; so he assumed a patience which he was far from feeling, and listened to what his Polish friend had to communicate.

"Do you know the policy of these men?" Polinski asked.

"I know it in a general way, of course," was the answer, "but I have never worked intimately with them."

"You do not endorse them, then?"

"I can only say," returned Lawless, in his usual cautious manner, "that in its main points their plan has had my approval."

"But you cannot know what has been proposed here tonight. You cannot be aware that they propose to make Ireland free by causing indiscriminate explosions of dynamite in the principal towns of England. Does that meet with your approval?"

"Certainly not," said Lawless.

"I am glad to hear it."

"These people, and others like them, are the curse of the Cause. I have never been able to control them. My great hope has been, since you have joined us, that you would convert them to your more practical and rational policy."

"Some few of them have fallen in with my ideas," said the old man, "but only a few. I have had to tell the meeting tonight that I cannot work with them."

Lawless looked his most sympathizing.

For all he cared, or ever had cared, they might fight it out between them; but he had to keep up the pretense of caring while there was a prospect of its eventually paying.

"They are crazy," said the Pole, despairingly. "All crime is stupid at the best, but this is mad. It is acts like the ones they propose that justify tyranny in the eyes of the world. They talk, many of them, more like hardened criminals than men moved by a love of their kind. There are McDermot and Fogarty—you know them."

"Yes; and, by the way, that reminds me, I must speak to Fogarty at once. I have some little influence, even with him, and shall exert it. Never despair, my friend! Only stand firm."

Polinski pressed the hand of the traitor, and sadly withdrew.

The assemblage was breaking up, but Lark managed to button-hole Fogarty, and they left the hall together.

A fitter tool for the purpose for which Lark Lawless intended him could not have been selected than Dan Fogarty.

Conscienceless, hardened and unprincipled, he knew no fear, no compunction. One redeeming point, if such it could be called, and one only, he possessed. He worked for pay, and he exacted it to the last stiver; but, once remunerated according to agreement, Fogarty was incorruptible. It was his boast—and let us give the scoundrel the benefit of it—that he never gave away those who hired him, provided they acted on the square.

"Dan," said Lawless, when, with his new ally, he had reached his apartments, brought out a bottle and glasses, and motioned him to a seat; "can you—but, first, will you try some whisky?"

"Will a duck swim?" was the somewhat contemptuous query of the accommodating Fogarty, as he helped himself to a liberal potation.

"What I wanted of you was this," continued Lark; "are you ready for a job?"

"Av coorse. That is, if there's money in it."

"You know there is, or I wouldn't ask your assistance. So, you're all right; but will the old woman join you in it?—for I shall need you both."

"Is it Mary Ellen? I'd break the neck of her if she was to do anything conthrairy. Sure, haven't I right till expect her to help in airnin' a livin'?"

"That you have. But she'll act willingly, I hope?"

"Divil a fear! The ould lady has l'arnt long ago which side her bread's buttered on."

"Good! Well, I'll make it worth her while, and yours, too, if you both succeed in this. Indeed, you must succeed. It is a case in which there must be no such word as fail."

Fogarty generously helped himself once more to the whisky.

"Who's the ger-ril?" he inquired.

"Never mind," said Lawless. "You are well acquainted with the Park, of course?"

"Is it Paradise Park?"

"No, Central."

"Faith, I know every foot of it, and Riverside and Mount Morris throwed in!"

"Central will do. Now, Dan, you know where Warder, the lawyer, lives?"

"Ould Warder, is it? As well as I know the Bowery! Up on the aist side of the Park, among the sixties."

"Just so. And you know the Major by sight, of course?"

"I c'u'd swear his hide in a tannery."

"That's near enough for identification," said Lark, with a laugh. "But can you tell me anything about his family?"

"Sure, he hasn't anny,' barrin' it's that stylish niece of his. It's an ould maid the Major is, as everybody in New York knows."

"Well, but the niece, Miss St. Orme—do you know her when you see her?"

"Like a book."

"Did you ever see her in the Park—by herself, I mean?"

"Many's the time."

"That's good. I am told she is in the habit of taking a constitutional there every fine afternoon. You are certain you are in no danger of mistaking some one else for her?"

"You may be sure I'll not strike in the dark, whatever it is that you want."

"I know you are not likely to do so. Well, Miss St. Orme may not be there tomorrow, but you must keep close watch until she does turn up.

"And now, Dan, let me tell you what I want you to do."

Then the villain unfolded the devilish plot which it had taken him but a few minutes that night to develop.

Fogarty professed no great difficulty in the way of carrying it out, and then the terms of the contract were agreed upon, and other matters arranged to their mutual satisfaction.

After the miscreant had gone, Lawless paced the apartment for some time in deep thought. It was evident that, though he foresaw the success of his plan, there was something beyond it which he felt must, sooner or later, be taken into consideration.

"The house will be all right," he muttered to himself, at length; "I can manage that easy enough. But afterward?

"Such a thing as coercing the fool into a marriage is not to be thought of, and it is certain that I can't keep her there forever. I can't bring myself, just yet, to the point of disposing of her in the primitive way in such cases; and yet she must be silenced—but how?

"For aught I know I may be getting myself into a bigger scrape than ever, though that is hardly possible; but things have so desperate a look at the present moment that I must act in the matter at once. When this step is taken, if Fogary only works it right—and he must—it will be time enough to consider what's to be done next. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

He stopped and listened, for he had caught the sound of a step upon the stairs.

A moment later there was a tap on his door.

"Come in!" he called out, in as unconcerned a tone as he could command.

"Oh, it's you, Mac?" he said, evidently relieved, when the well-known face and form of Dermot McDermot presented itself.

"Yes, it's mesilf," responded that worthy. "Are ye plaised to see me?"

"Well, rather, I'll admit," said Lark, with something of his old smile. "The truth is, I intended looking you up tomorrow."

"You were late at the meetin' tonight, and ye lit out in such a hurry I hadn't a chance to have a word with you. That ould Polinski is as crazy as a bed-bug."

"A little off, perhaps," replied Lawless; "but there's a good deal in what he says, nevertheless."

"A good dale of guff, ye mane?"

"Yes, and something better; but we'll talk of that another time. What I wanted to see you for, Mac, was this: You have the key of the house in West Twenty-ninth street, I suppose?"

"I have that."

"And no one else has one?"

"Divil a soul!"

"That's well. You must lend it to me."

"If I must, I must; but you'll tell a fellow what for, I suppose?'

"Oh, as to that, you needn't ask," said Lark, smiling meaningly.

"I see. There's a lady in the case."

"Maybe so. But the key?"

"Here it is," said McDermot, producing it; "but I've left some of my patent packages there—not many, though, only two or three."

"Enough, in all conscience, to do mischief; but I'll remove the little boxes. The books may remain. They'll be useful in a solitude of that kind."

After a brief review of the discussion that had taken place among the patriots, McDermot left. He was by no means pleased that his friend Lawless had not seen fit to take him into his entire confidence in the affair of the mysterious house in West Twenty-ninth street.

"But I think I see through his little game for all that," he chuckled; "and it ain't thraiting me dacent when it was mesilf that inthrojuced him to the ould man. Never mind, Lark, me boy, I'll pay you back yet!

"I can see as far through a millstone as ever another man from Cork to Connemara; and if it ain't ould Warder's niece ye're thinkin' of hidin' away, I'll ate my head!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ABDUCTION.

The home of Miss St. Orme was situated but a few doors from the Park, on the east side; and, since the return of Major Warder and his niece in the early autumn, Cora had, when not otherwise occupied, spent an hour or so each day in taking a constitutional within its pleasant precincts.

The young girl had a fondness for solitude and the beauties of nature ever unfolded new scenes to her appreciative eye.

It was the afternoon of the day following the interview that has been recorded between Larkin Lawless and Dermot McDermot, that Cora, just as the twilight fell, was approaching the entrance nearest her uncle's house, after an extended stroll. The only persons in sight were an aged couple, man and woman, the latter apparently very feeble. A park bench was some yards in advance of them.

"Thry an' hould up, Shusan dear," Cora heard the old man say to his companion; "hould up a few steps, an' thin ye can rest on the binch a while."

But it soon seemed that the effort was too much for the poor woman, and her husband, if such he was—and scarcely less frail in appearance than herself—had to support her in his arms.

The young lady's sympathies were at once aroused, and she hastened forward.

"Can I assist you?" she inquired.

"Thank ye kindly, Miss," said the man; "but she must rest here a while, I'm afther thinkin'. Now, Shusan, dear," and he placed the old creature gently on the iron seat.

"It's better ye feel, is it?" he asked.

"I'm mighty wake, John," she whispered.

"Go and bring a carriage," urged Cora. "There is one just a little way ahead. I'll remain with your wife."

"Sure, it's kind ye are, entirely!"

The old man laid a heavy shawl which he carried by the side of his wife, and hastened off, with wonderful alacrity for one apparently so infirm; and Cora was left alone with the old woman.

Hardly had her companion left than the latter began to revive, to the extent, at least, of raising her head and looking searchingly up and down the path, and out toward the drive which was just visible.

"You feel stronger, I'm sure," said the young lady, encouragingly.

"I have me smellin' bottle here," was the reply, as she held up a good-sized vial, "but it seems to be wake all at once."

So saying, the old creature extended the bottle to Cora, as if asking her to test its strength. The girl took it, and the instant she did so the frail old being seemed to fall over against her, and the fluid was spilled upon her face and breast."

She at once detected the odor, but before she could struggle from the treacherous hag's embrace she had caught up the shawl which the man had left, and the next moment Cora's head and half her person were enveloped in its folds, and the fumes of the chloroform thus confined in space. She drew her victim's head upon her lap just as some pedestrians passed, and they observed nothing singular in the pair thus seated by the walk in the gloaming.

Another minute and the cab drove up near them. The old man, leaving it, came forward and assisted his wife to bear the unconscious form which she supported to the carriage.

"Gently, John dear," said the woman, as they came within hearing of the driver; "poor Miss Mary's slapin' like an infant, so she is."

She entered the cab, her husband passed the insensible girl to her arms, and took the front seat. This done, they removed the heavy wrap, fearful that the powerful narcotic had done more than they had bargained for. But nothing so serious, most providentially, had happened.

The intelligent cabby, however, who had been prepared for something of the kind when his vehicle was engaged, caught a whiff of the sickening opiate, and grinned.

"Perty well done for you, Mary Ellen," was the approving remark of her lord and master when they felt themselves being driven southward.

"And it's well done for annybody, I think it is," was the hag's rejoinder. "Is there ever a woman, or man aither, for that matter, c'u'd ha' managed it betther—that's what I want to know? But it's always yer way till me makin' little of annything I do."

"Sure, ain't I afther commindin' it? There's no plaisin' the likes o' you. I tould my fine young spark I'd do the business for him in good shape, and he'll see I kept me word."

"You'd do it, is it? It's a dale you'd do by yerself! An' what's to be my share of the dollars that's promised? Will ye tell me that?"

"What agrament did ye make? I know well enough what I'm to get. Trust me to make sure o' that same before I stirred a step; an' if you'd been smart enough ye might ha' done the same, it's like."

"Do ye mane till tell," exclaimed the termagant, raising her voice, "that I'm till get nothin' afther the throuble I've had, an' the lies I've tould——"

"It's heavy on yer conscience them same must be lyin'," interrupted her husband.

"An' I'm till get nothin'," she continued.

"It's a broken head ye'll get, ould lady, an' that purty quick, if ye don't shut up your snappy ould potaty-trap. Ye'll be afther havin' the cops on our heels, with yer squallin' out like a blasted guinea-hin."

This calmed her down slightly.

"Niver mind, Dan, me man," she resumed, more quietly; "I'll make me bargain wid the pair o' ye when we come to the takin' charge o' the house."

"Be the powers of Moll Kelly!" he burst out, admiringly, "but it's the credit ye are to me trainin' after all! It's mesilf that never give a thought to that same. He'll be afther wantin' a lady an' gintleman till take charge o' the mansion, an' who more likely to come in for the billet nor ourselves?"

"Ah, ye're a bright one entirely, wid all yer smartness! But, upon me stockin's, if yer fine young gintleman wants a lady for the head of his shebang, he'll have to pay well for that same!"

"I'll not go against ye in that," said Dan, complacently, as the cab drew up at the curbstone of the number he had given.

It was noticeable that, while in the carriage, the pair had the appearance of having docked at least a score of years from their respective ages, once at the house designated, and in the presence of the cab-driver they were old and almost decrepid.

Cora was still unconscious, and between them they removed her from the cab, and soon had the door of the house open. They then carried her into the hall, paid the coachman, and dismissed him.

This done, they sat down by the insensible girl, who lay on a lounge in the as yet unlighted passage, and waited for a signal which had been agreed upon. Both were jubilant, but the woman especially so, for she was bent on making her own terms with her husband's employer when it came to taking charge of the young lady she had aided in abducting.

If he failed to act liberally, the said Mary Ellen would have no hesitancy—so she said to herself, and she meant every word of it—in selling him out to the highest bidder. Her liege lord we have already described as, if equally sordid, less dishonorable. Once paid for the services rendered, Dan would be true as steel, no matter what the temptation to be otherwise.

Meanwhile, his shrewd and shrewish helpmeet was cogitating over the demands she fully intended to make for taking the duties of janitress and duenna, which she confidently expected would be offered her.

Even if they were not, she believed herself to be in a position to demand them, or anything else she pleased; for the principal in the affair just consummated was in her power.

"It's worth a good fifty dollars a month, that's what it is, an' twice as much for the housekeepin' expinses, besides ixtries."

In this way she reckoned it.

"Be jakirs, thim last is what you won't be afther forgettin', or I've never boarded wid ye, ould lady; an' that is what me young gintleman will be findin' out till his cost if he gives ye the place."

"Which same he'll do."

"Maybe so, Mary Ellen, an' maybe not," said the cautious Daniel.

"You'll see," was the sententious reply.

"Faith, yes! I'll see ducks—when they're hatched."

Dan sprang to his feet as he spoke, for a pedestrian going along the sidewalk was whistling in a peculiar manner.

He opened the door softly, and coughed.

The man turned and came up the steps. The hall and the entire building were in Egyptian darkness.

The cabman had lingered some time after the door was shut, but had at length driven off.

Before he did so, however, he gave vent to his conclusions in regard to the affair in which he had been engaged.

"'Tain't no affair of mine, fur as I know," said this Gamaliel, "but it has a mighty crooked look, and don't ye forget to bear it in mind. Gal chloroformed, as sure as shootin', and that darned ole shelter for rats they've tuck her to is as dark as a squaw's pocket!

"An' that ole pair o' frauds—warn't they got up regardless, though? Hanged if they wouldn't fool Bob Pinkerton himself! But this hairpin ain't tooken in worth a cent, not much!

"John an' Susan, too! My eye and Betty Martin! The ole gal may be who she darn pleases, but the rooster she trains with—well, if he ain't Dan Fogarty of the Shantytown gang, I'll vote for Ben Butler for President, and leave the country if he ain't elected!"

CHAPTER XV.

PLOTTING AND COUNTER-PLOTTING.

Dermot McDermot was anything but pleased, as we have noticed, when he saw that Lark Lawless was not disposed to give more than half confidence, and hardly that, in regard to the use to which he intended putting the unoccupied dwelling to which he, Dermot, held the key. He gave it up, however, apparently with perfect willingness; but he took good care to remember that he retained a duplicate of the same.

Nor was Mrs. Fogarty in any better humor when she found herself put in charge, as she had anticipated, but without having been able to "work the racket," as she had expressed it, for all it was worth.

The upshot of the matter had been that Lark, knowing, perhaps, of old that easier terms could be made with Dan than with his better half, arranged them accordingly without consulting her. That excellent citizen had then persuaded, to use a mild word, the gentle Mary Ellen to assume the duties at once under his direction.

It was a bitter pill for one of her independent spirit to swallow, and, although she had been put in much the same position more than once since her union with Mr. Fogarty, yet she had never done it with so ill a grace in her life before. She began to think that the time had come when forbearance ceased to be a virtue.

Frankly, Madam Fogarty from this out held the information she possessed as a marketable commodity. No matter who applied, provided she was well paid, Mary Ellen was prepared to sell out Larkin Lawless, and Dan Fogarty, too, for that matter.

And Lark Lawless, rejoiced at the success, so far, of his villainous scheme, was now in a greater quandary than ever.

Could Cora St. Orme be kept concealed for any length of time?

It was doubtful.

Even if this could be done, what was to be the upshot of it?

Certainly not marriage.

What then?

Death!

He started violently as the fearful word seemed whispered to him.

Whence had come the temptation?

What demon had uttered it?

Startled though he was, and viewing the mere thought with horror, he nevertheless found it impossible to shake off the dread suggestion.

Then it came in another form.

Must it not be settled in that way at last, if he would be safe—if he was not prepared to stand charged with the murder of Anne Molyneux?

And suppose Cora should be found, that she should be traced to the place in which he had concealed her—and this was at least possible—was not this certain to follow?

And it meant to him, Larkin Lawless, the young, the gifted, the popular, the ambitious—it meant dishonor, disgrace, and death!

He was staggered, almost paralyzed, by the probability, the almost certainy which was thus presented to him. Was there no escape?

He asked himself this again and again.

Still the answer was the same.

None!

Had it come to this? Was he, who though false and dishonorable at heart from the first, prided himself on keeping up an external show of honor and probity, to sink thus suddenly to the level of a common assassin?

He could not. He would not!

He swore it almost fiercely.

But what alternative was there—what escape was there for him?

The same response from his coward soul—none!

Then came a fresh whisper from the tempter.

Lawless bethought him of the cunningly contrived cases which McDermot spoke of having left in the house he had hired. It had been Larkin's intention to remove the small box of explosives from each, and to leave the books for the entertainment of his captive.

Now he remembered that he had not done so.

Ha! There was the way out of it.

The fiend suggested that this forgetfulness on his part had been providential.

Anyway, as it had happened so, he would let them remain. The fault would be more McDermot's than his.

Lark, thus decided, went out for a stroll, rather to avoid callers than for aught else. On his return an hour or two later, he came face to face with Dermot McDermot in the rotunda.

They sat down together near the entrance.

McDermot, always a knave of the lowest description, with his fresh grievance—for so he fancied it—against the man with whom he had been so long associated, was now fully prepared to trump his partner's trick. He met Lark, however, in his accustomed free and easy manner; and the pair chatted, in a cautious undertone, of the last move that Lawless had been making.

But the latter still withheld from his old partner the name of the fair inmate of the borrowed prison-house.

"Confound him!" was McDermot's inward imprecation; "just as if I didn't know as well as if I'd been there already, that it's the Warder gerril! Why couldn't he trust me—bad luck to him!

"But he'll find out what his goin' back on me at this time o' day costs him, and that before another blissid sun shines, or my mother—rest her sowl!—wasn't a Cassidy!"

Safe as the two men thought themselves from observation, and unsuspecting as to eavesdroppers, there was one who had seen and noted them from the moment they had met. This man, though unobserved by either of them, was, all the while that they were conversing, reclining on a lounge near the door which was generally appropriated by the porters; and, with a newspaper over his face, and being apparently asleep, was supposed by them to be in reality one of those functionaries.

Not one word that they let fall escaped this individual.

Not only that, but he noticed, when now and then he stole a covert glance at the pair, that Lawless had taken a Yale key from his pocket and was nervously handling it.

Could that be the "open sesame" of the mysterious house?

This he was determined to find out.

Presently Lark arose and announced his intention of making his toilet for dinner. McDermot declined an invitation to join him, and left the hotel.

Then the listener straightened himself up.

It was Mondelet, the supposed deaf Frenchman.

There was a strange light in his eyes as he followed Lark Lawless to the washroom.

Lark stood, his back toward the door, while he rubbed his face with a crash towel. He had removed his coat, which hung on the rack.

Unperceived, the man felt in the breast pocket and removed the key which, a minute before, he had seen in Lark's hand.

With a look of triumph he stealthily glanced around, and finding himself unnoticed, slipped from the room.

Mondelet knew, or thought he knew, the house of which the two conspirators had been speaking. He had, more than once, since his return to New York, followed McDermott, as well as Lawless, and had seen the former enter that apparently unoccupied dwelling. That this was the same, he had little doubt. But, whatever might be the secrets it contained, he felt now that they were within his reach.

Dermot McDermot paced the street by himself for some time after parting from his quondam friend. His mind was fully made up.

He would "euchre" the cunning Lark Lawless, no matter what the upshot of the matter might be. The temptation was too great.

"But I'll not vinture inside the ould ranch till afther dark," he said. "That Fogarty woman—more power to her, though she's the divil's own skinflint at a bargain—has promised to l'ave the coast clear for an hour or two, and Dan has been as drunk as a lord since yistherday.

"I'll take it aisy, for there's not one chance in a bushel of my trippin' up. Let me see: I'll purtend, if it's the Warder woman—or divil cares who it is for that matter, for if I know Lark Lawless at all it's somebody worth nabbin'—I'll purtend I've discovered she had been kidnaped, an' that I've come to the rescue.

"Glory be to goodness! But it's lucky I thought of that same. It's sure to make it all plain sailin' at the start. I'll take a cab, and drive off wid the damsel from the enchanted castle, wid all the grace of a knight errant. It's meself's a 'Donkey-Hoty,' if ever there was one!"

There is no doubt that McDermot was, indeed, a "donkey" of some kind.

However, he went speedily to work arranging his plans; not forgetting to fortify himself several times with a few fingers of his favorite beverage.

Nine o'clock that evening saw him, elegantly attired and seated in a carriage, bound for the gloomy house in West Twenty-ninth street.

"It's welcome I'll be," he whispered to himself, complacently; "and that's one point gained. Miss Cora, if it's herself—an' I feel in me bones it is, always had a kind of sneakin' regard for me, or I'm mightily mistaken, and this night's work ought to settle it.

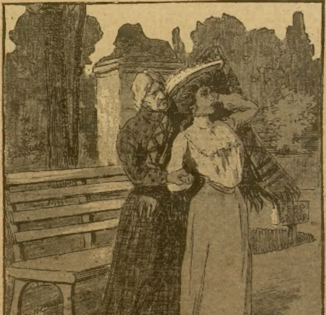
"It's only the natheral order of things, as I may say. Even a stranger would have a fine show under these sarcumstances.

"Dermot, me boy, I'm inclined to think ye'll have nothin' more to worry about in this world."

He was right. He would not.

Lightly he tripped up the steps, inserted the key, and soon stood within the house.

Next week's issue of the Ledger will present further chapters of this highly interesting story to the reader. It will pay you to follow the characters to the end of the narrative. Each subscriber to the Ledger is entitled to our free cameras and patterns as advertised on pages thirteen and fifteen.



The abduction.

THE ETERNAL FEMININE.

The mermaid and the summer girl
  Were chatting on the sand—
The mermaid tossed a vagrant curl
  Back with a graceful hand.
"I am your sister," murmured she,
  "Although we are no kin—
Your beau is your affinity;
  I call my beau a 'fin.'"

The mermaid and the summer belle,
  Exchanging knowing smiles,
Told how they each laughed at the swell,
  And how they used their wiles
To test their lovers' constancy.
  The mermaid told her plan;
"You fret the summer man," said she;
  "I, too, fret some merman."

A step was heard along the beach,
  A splash from out at sea—
The summer girl and mermaid each
  Said: "He is wooing me."
The mermaid and the summer girl
  Each went to join her "him"—
And soon both in the billows' whirl
  Were learning how to swim!

MISS BLAZER.

BY MAX ADELER.

Young Mr. Sparks entered the law office of Judge Smith with rather a sorrowful cast of countenance. Drawing up a chair he gently inquired:

"Does the law allow damages for injury to a man's feelings, Judge?"

"Not often; sometimes."

"Not when you're cut up, mortified, trodden on, insulted, mad?"

"I can tell better when I know the facts."

"Well, I'll state my case. You know, Judge, that church affair that was held in the hall last night? I went there, and John Wormley introduced me to a most awfully pretty girl, Miss Blazer. I never met her before. She was just splendid, you know. Uncommon agreeable; and I treated her to oysters and ice cream and bought her a pincushion, and a lampmat, and a whole lot of fiddle-faddle. Spent about four dollars, you know, and she seemed so mighty pleasant that I thought I'd made a hit; dead in love with her, you understand."

"Quick work, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but she was so very handsome and so bewilderingly affable. And so, about 10 o'clock, I asked her if I might see her home. She said I might. I didn't know where she lived, and I didn't care. So we started, and she struck out for the Woodbury pike, and I asked her if she was a neighbor to the Smileys, and she said she wasn't. Then we walked on, and on, and on, until we got clear out of the country, and I inquired if her father was in the farming business, and she said no. So we kept going, and pretty soon it began to rain, and as I had no umbrella I asked her to let me throw my coat around her, and she consented, and I walked by her side in my shirt sleeves."

"Did she seem grateful?"

"Well, not much. But when we'd gone about half a mile farther she said she thought she saw a highway robber or something a few yards ahead—dark as pitch, you know—and wouldn't I go in advance and see what it was. So I walked boldly on, and the first thing I knew I ran against one of the sideposts of the tollgate and skinned my nose. Look at it! Made it bleed, too. Then she said she knew where she was now, and we could go right along. I asked her if she lived near the tollgate, and she said 'not so very.' However, I knew I had made an impression on that girl and I didn't care much for distance. So we walked along until we passed Simpson's schoolhouse and came to Huckleberry Creek. She said it just flashed across her then that the bridge was down, and she couldn't imagine how she was to get across."

"Couldn't swim, could she?"

"Not deep enough, you know. So I hemmed and hawed a while, and then I told her that I didn't like to make the offer, but I'd wade and carry her, if she'd let me."

"Refused, of course, I suppose?"

"She accepted on the spot, and I got her across safely, although I was wet up to my knees. So then we kept going along, and along, and along, until I got kind of uneasy, when all of a sudden she said she was afraid she had missed the road, it was so dark, and wouldn't I go to that house close by and ask them if this was the Woodbury pike or Hatborn lane. I went, but before I could get to the doorbell a dog came booming at me, and I ran for the gate. Put your hand right there, on my leg. Feel that? That's the bandage over that dog bite. A quarter of a pound of flesh gone, at the very least."

"Did she sympathize with you?"

"Well, not as much as I expected. And then we walked, and walked, and walked, until I began to think she must live somewhere on the Pacific Coast, when presently she said:

"'There's our house! I see a light!'

"That was one satisfaction, anyhow, for I knew she would ask me in, and have me dried, and maybe her mother might ask me to stay all night, so that I'd have a chance to get acquainted with the family and to see her in the morning."

"Well?"

"Well, we went up, and when I rang the bell, a young fellow came to the door, and he says:

"'Why, Emily, is it you? We thought you intended to stay at Ferguson's, or I'd have come for you.'

"Then she introduced me, and said this was the gentleman she was engaged to. Engaged to, mind you! And he thanked me for bringing her home. I, you understand, standing on the front steps all this time. And the gentleman she was engaged to handed me my coat, and said to Emily:

"'No use of asking Mr. Sparks in at this time of night, of course?'

"And Emily said:

"'He'll want to get home as quick as he can, I am sure.'

"And like an old fool, I said:

"'Of course.'

"And so I quit, and they went in and shut the door.

"It was just four miles home. I got in at about daylight, wet above, soaked below, and full of bruises, mutilated nose, dog bites, and frantic with anxiety to play particular thunder with the whole Blazer family, and the young man to whom Emily was engaged. Now, what can I do about it?"

The Judge explained that there was no ground for an action in law, and Sparks went out talking about murder and sudden death; but he must have changed his mind. The Blazer family is still intact up to this writing.

How People Live.

A lady traveling in Japan gives the following sketch of an inn at which she stopped: "The landlord and his wife and the servants all come to talk to you and when you inform the company that you are sleepy and want your bed laid, everybody says at once, 'Honorable bed augustly is it?' but nobody does anything, and when at last you have achieved your desire you have to force apart, in defiance of police regulations, the wooden shutters which hermetically seal the house, in order to avoid being smothered with the fumes of charcoal and humans. As soon as things are quiet enough rats chase over the rooms and generally over you as well and sometimes bite you. One o'clock in the morning, in the old Japanese reckoning, was called 'the hour of the rat,' doubtless for this reason. And all night long the watchman sounds his rattle to show that he is attending to his duties. You have to be up with the cock to get the first go at the bath, which is only filled once, and the wash hand basin, which is only as large as a cake tin, is always kept in the veranda."

Health, an English publication, says: "It is good to laugh. There is probably not the remostest corner or little inlet of the minute blood vessels of the body that does not feel some wavelet from the great convulsion produced by hearty laughter shaking the central man. The blood moves more rapidly—probably its chemical, electric or vital condition is distinctly modified, it conveys a different impression to all the organs of the body as it visits them on that particular mystic journey when the man is laughing from what it does at other times. The time may come when physicians shall prescribe to a torpid patient so many peals of laughter to be undergone at such and such a time."

Dr. Yorke-Davies tells this story: "Many years ago when a great English contractor had to lay down a long line of railway in France he employed a number of English and of French navvies. He found that the Frenchmen could do only half the work of the Englishmen and being a shrewd man he concluded it must be due to the difference in their food, so he then put the Frenchmen on the same diet as the Englishmen, with the result that they were able to do as much work as the Englishmen. It showed how important a factor food was in the production of muscular power."

Rather Light.

Gunner—Yes, I drank to drown my sorrows.

Guyer—And did you drown them?

Gunner—No. My sorrows were in my head, and the more I drank the more my head would swim.

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A silk hat that's worn all night loses its nap.

Never judge a man by the jury that acquits him.

Grandpa Davis is not getting any younger all this time.

Too much knowledge has been known to strangle happiness.

The world is too busy to hand the chronic grumbler what he deserves.

One-half the world knows how the other half lives, but it doesn't care.

Ask a man to describe a gentleman and he will invariably describe himself.

It may not be easier to coax a woman than it is to drive her, but it is safer.

Poverty is no disgrace; the disgrace begins when you are unable to hide it.

The engineer of a train of thought should know how to handle the throttle properly.

The girl who is the most popular with men in general is apt to make one man miserable for life.

When a $2,000 fire insurance policy rubs against a $1,000 house it is apt to start a conflagration.

Women are extremists. They are never satisfied unless they can wear small shoes and large hats.

Colombia cannot fight Uncle Sam, but it continues to find a rich satisfaction in making faces at him.

Don't imagine you are a vocalist simply because the neighbors fail to shoot at you when you attempt to sing.

The small boy who furnishes the motive power for a grindstone isn't easily convinced that turn about is fair play.

The book of life is an arithmetic in which the answers to the problems are conspicuous on account of their absence.

Joseph Chamberlain will have no trouble in getting a following. That men could tax themselves rich always was an alluring idea.

Doubtless Mr. Roosevelt has observed that a talk from the front porch reads just as well in the papers as one from the Pullman car platform.

Judging from the number of persons who have come out of there from time to time Port Arthur must have been one of the largest cities in the world when the war broke out.

On being interrupted by an auditor at an Indiana political debate Champ Clark shouted: "Call me a liar and I will cut your throat." Yet there are persons who affect to believe that Champ is not quick at repartee.

LOVE'S GUILTY DREAM

Or

THE IDOL OF THE REGIMENT.

BY ADRIENNE ROUCOLLE.

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CHAPTER XXII.

SHATTERED HOPES.

The days and the nights passed slowly for the weary watchers around Marie's deathbed. She was still in the western wing of the castle where for so many months she had been held captive. Major Leblanc had thought it best not to have her removed, and Dr. Charcot who had arrived during the night had seconded his plan, for he said:

"She has but a short time to live. To remove her would simply hasten the end, and at the same time make us lose the chance of making use of the flash of reason which may light her last moments."

"What!" cried Irene, as tears filled her eyes, "she may know me again, she may be able to speak—to tell us all!"

"Yes, this phenomenon often happens; it seems as though the brain before succumbing to the annihilation of death gives forth a last ray of intelligence. And if I may judge from so brief an examination, I can almost predict that Madam du Terrail will have a few hours of reason before her death."

These words caused Irene to remain continually by her friend's side, and for three days she and Jenny had watched and waited.

Charcot had returned to Paris, for he saw that there was nothing for him to do. Major Leblanc came every night, and for some hours relieved Irene of her watch. The old housekeeper had kept from the other servants the secret of Irene's discovery, and as the doctor and the Colonel came at night and made use of the secret passage, life in the castle continued the same as usual, while upstairs in the haunted room the Marquise du Terrail was dying.

She was sinking rapidly now, yet no flash of reason pierced the clouds of her brain. From the Major's face, which became graver every time he came, Irene saw that, like her, he was losing hope. Besides, the day of the wedding was at hand.

At the Villa des Roses, Lady Hilton's country home, all was ready; the bride had arrived, and tonight the Marquis and his guests were expected at the castle, and on the morrow he was to reap the fruits of his schemings and crimes and make of Judith his bride and his victim.

Pale, and with weary eyes, Irene stood by the window, looking out on the settling shades of the summer twilight; Jenny, on a divan, had just fallen asleep. The hope that for the last few days had sustained Irene, was leaving her heart. The Marquis would arrive within an hour and Marie had not spoken. And would she speak? That question returned to her with torturing pain.

She was determined that the wedding should not take place, and that Lady Hilton should be saved the crowning shame of becoming the bride of a murderer. She would have preferred to tell her sooner, to warn her before things had proceeded so far, but her desire to avenge Marie's sufferings had caused her to remain silent.

She was thus far in her thoughts when the sound of the carriage wheels in the court below caused her to look down. A coach stopped by the terrace and several gentlemen descended. She recognized the Marquis du Terrail, and was it the effect of her excited imagination, or the settling shades of the night, that made him appear livid and trembling? The wedding was to be very quiet, just the civil marriage without religious pomp or display, because the faith of the bride and the divorced condition of the groom cut them both from the fold of the church. So the guests were few, just half a dozen of his most intimate friends. They would make up for the simplicity of their marriage by the brilliancy of the fetes they would give on their return from their wedding tour, du Terrail had told Judith, and she had consented.

Fearing that du Terrail might wish to visit the haunted room, she left the window and locked the door of the hall; at the same time she took up her hunting gun and made sure that all was in order. If the Marquis attempted to enter her resolution was taken; she would defend the opening, and, if necessary, fire. But she need not have feared, for du Terrail's duties as host kept him with his guests until late in the night; then a nameless fear of entering the room where he had committed a murder made him unwilling to go near the haunted room. Besides, earlier in the evening he had gone to the park, and the trampled grass beside the old oak seemed to prove that his accomplice had done his work.

While Irene was thinking that the Marquis might wish to visit the haunted tower, footsteps in the other room caused her heart to cease its throbbings; but with her fright never lasted long, for she did not even waken Jenny, but with her gun ready to fire, she walked to the door and found herself face to face with Armand Lepage. At sight of him an exclamation, both of relief and pleasure, came to her lips.

"You here!" she murmured in muffled tones. "Why did you come, and at this time, too? You might have been seen."

In the same guarded tones as she had used he replied:

"I knew the Marquis du Terrail was to spend the night at the castle, and de Lorgnac's fate gave me the right to fear for you, my brave-hearted darling."

"You need not have feared, Armand, for I was prepared," and with a smile, the first that had come to her lips for the last three days, she showed the gun she still held in her hands.

He took it from her and, resting it by the wall, led her to the window that by the rapidly declining light he might see her face. When he did, he cried in alarm:

"Irene, how pale you are, and how tired you seem! What folly to undertake this task by yourself, and not let the police do the work!"

Tears suddenly filled her eyes, that for a moment had resumed their happy beam, and pointing to the bed placed near the outer window, she showed the ghost-like figure outlined beneath the covers.

"She was my friend, Armand, the companion of my youth. She has suffered, her name has been covered with unmerited disgrace, and I am the only one who is free to avenge her. Besides, I must do penance for having deserted her, for, like the rest, I believed the tale the heartless villain had invented to rid himself of the wife he had ceased to love—nay, whom he had married solely for her wealth, since Marie inherited a snug fortune from her mother."

It was night by this time, and the Marquis' presence in the castle forbade them lighting the lamp. They waited in silence, oppressed by the darkness and still more by the labored breathing coming from the bed. Jenny, waking, had joined them by the window, and all three waited. The night air, entering through the open window, fanned their brows, but the oppression continued, growing more intense as the minutes went slowly by.

By 9 o'clock the moon rose above the tree-tops and cast her luminous rays into the room. Marie was still sleeping, but it was clear that the end was near. When the Major arrived a few moments later he had but to look at her face, and without nearing the bed he turned to Irene and said:

"You wished me to tell you some time before, when Madame du Terrail would die; I can safely say that she will not live to see tomorrow's sun."

Controlling her emotion, Irene asked:

"Will she speak?"

"I cannot tell. She may pass from sleep into coma without opening her eyes, or she may waken, and, if she does, she will, in all probability, have regained her reason."

For a while Irene was silent, a few tears rolling unheeded down her cheeks; then, turning to Irene, she asked:

"You rode, did you not?"

"Yes; why?"

"I need your horse; where did you tie him?"

"Need my horse? Why, where are you going?"

"I am going to get Lady Hilton. It is but right that she should know the truth before the scandal becomes public. She—poor deluded woman!—will receive the deepest wound, for she loves this man."

"But you surely are not going alone?"

"Yes, I am going alone. Your horse would not carry two and as I want to tell Lady Hilton myself, there is no other way but going alone. Besides, you have nothing to fear, the moon is bright, the road safe, and I know how to ride at night as well as in the daytime."

Armand and Jenny tried to dissuade her, but Irene remained firm, and finally, in spite of his many misgivings, Lepage consented to tell Irene where he had tied his horse. He wanted to go with her and see her off, but she refused. She left them and some ten minutes later she was in the saddle, and her horse, answering the impulse of the lines, was darting down the road toward the Villa des Roses. When, at last, she reached Lady Hilton's home, all the lights were out and sleep had settled over the house. Not dismayed by this, Irene rang the bell. After some delay a sleepy servant opened the door, and Irene, without giving him time to question her, entered the hall and said:

"I am Irene D'Oban, and must see Lady Hilton at once."

"But her ladyship has retired, and——"

"She must be awakened, for I must see her without delay; it is about the Marquis du Terrail."

That name, and the authoritative tones of the girl, produced on the man the desired effect, and he said:

"I will see what I can do," and he left her, carrying the lamp he held in his hand.

Irene, left alone in the dark hall, waited with painful impatience; her heart throbbed with anguish, and by great effort she forced back the tears which came to her eyes. In her happy, careless life she had not yet tasted the stern realities of existence; no cloud had ever dimmed the azure of her sky, but tonight, for the first time, she was made to feel, through her sympathy, the misery which can torture a human heart.

She was suddenly recalled to reality by Lady Hilton, who descended the stairs. Never had Judith appeared so tragically beautiful as tonight. Her dark beauty was brought out by the light of the wax taper she held in her hand. The massive coils of black hair fell in profuse negligence over the white cashmere wrapper she had hastily put on, and the eyes, large and deep, full of anxious fear, made one wonder if she were a living woman, or simply the creation of an excited brain.

"You, Mademoiselle!" she cried, when she had joined the young girl. "You here at this hour, and alone! What has happened; what is this they tell me, that your visit has something to do with the Marquis du Terrail? I can't understand, yet I am afraid."

Irene seized the extended hand and softly, while her eyes gazed with pitying emotion upon the eager face before her, said:

"Yes, my visit has something to do with the Marquis, but I must see you alone," pointing to the group of wondering servants who had come into the hall.

Judith's face became a shade paler, yet by a powerful effort she controlled herself and said:

"Follow me to my room."

When the door was closed upon them she ceased to hide her emotion, and questioned eagerly:

"Now tell me what has happened. Is he ill? Is he dead? Tell me the worst—better that than this suspense."

Irene forced Judith to take a chair and, kneeling at her feet, said:

"Pardon me the pain I will cause you; pardon me for breaking your heart, for, believe me, I would have saved you this blow if I could."

"But what is it? Tell me at once!" broke in Lady Hilton, wildly.

"Listen, and be calm. I never liked the Marquis du Terrail, and I thought that at heart he was not the man he appeared to be before the world. I never approved of Marie marrying him, and after she disappeared I could not approve of your taking her place. Do not interrupt me, for what I have to say is so painful that I ask to be allowed to tell you in my own way.

"Though she never told me, I long guessed he had made Marie unhappy, and I liked you too well to have him ruin your life as he has done hers. I had heard the silly story of the castle's ghosts, and I had even seen the figures claimed to be the ghosts, but to me they had not the outlines of phantoms, but of living creatures. For a long time I have wanted to visit the western wing of the castle, but Marie's supposed flight——"

"Supposed flight, did you say?" cried Judith, as a sudden fear leaped into her eyes.

"Yes, supposed flight—but pray let me continue. Marie's supposed flight did not give me the chance to carry out that desire. Last week, in company with Colonel Deo and my brother, we passed after night by the castle. The western wing rose above the trees of the park. In the haunted room shone the light from a lantern. This caused a return of my desire to fathom the mystery, and partly through curiosity and partly for your sake, I took four of my brother's soldiers with me and together we went ghost-hunting."

Lady Hilton could no longer control herself and, rising, she questioned breathlessly: And you found—— oh, tell me, what did you find?"

Irene rose also. The decisive moment had arrived; she must deal the final blow, and in one brief moment destroy this woman's hopes of future bliss. Pity made her hesitate, but another panting question from Judith caused her to answer:

"I found the Marquise du Terrail held captive by her husband, who had murdered the unfortunate man she was supposed to have run away with."

These words caused Lady Hilton to stagger backward, an alarming pallor stole over her face, her eyes half closed, she extended her hands as though to save herself from falling, but the next instant she had recovered, and she asked in low, unearthly tones:

"The proofs? Give me the proofs that you are not mistaken."

"I have come to get you, that you may see the Marquise du Terrail before she dies, for the doctor says she will not live till morning."

"Where is she?"

"She is still at the castle."

"And—and the Marquis?"

"He is there, too."

"Then I don't understand," and Judith passed her hand over her brow like one in a dream.

"The Marquis du Terrail does not know of our presence in the haunted tower, for we can reach it by an underground passage coming from the Japanese summer house. Besides, he thinks his wife dead, for the guardian of the unfortunate Marie was ordered to kill her before today."

Judith shuddered and Irene continued:

"I came to get you tonight that you may be the first to know the terrible secret. Tomorrow morning the Marquis du Terrail will be arrested for the murder of the Comte de Lorgnac, and the imprisonment of his wife. But before that I wished you to have time to act. Will you come?"

"Yes, I will go," was the answer, and Judith, ringing the bell, ordered her carriage at once.

During the time her maid dressed her she remained silent and stiff as a statue. Only her eyes spoke of the tempest within and of the dark thoughts which filled her brain.

It was only when they were seated in the carriage and were speeding rapidly toward the castle that Judith spoke again, but all she said was:

"I am listening. You can tell me how you discovered the secret of the haunted wing."

CHAPTER XXIII.

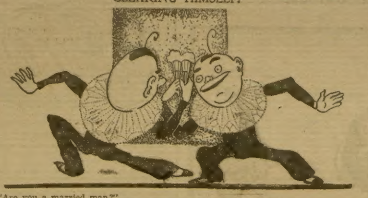
AT THE LAST HOUR.

During the ride back to the castle Irene related to Lady Hilton the story told her by Francois Dunton. Judith listened in silence, and if her face betrayed her suffering, the darkness of the coupe kept the secret. When Irene had finished a sigh which was almost a sob passed her listener's lips, then Judith asked:

"Are you sure that the Marquis du Terrail does not know that his secret has been discovered?"

"His presence at the castle is ample proof that he knows nothing. He is far too clever

CLEARING HIMSELF.



"Are you a married man?"
"No. My hair fell out from typhoid fever."

to thus throw himself in the hands of the police."

"I see," was Lady Hilton's only answer, and until the coupe paused by the little gate of the park she did not utter another word.

At last the dreary ride came to an end, and the two women descended from the carriage. The moon shone brightly and Irene for the first time saw her companion's face. An ashy pallor overspread her features; her eyes appeared larger and deeper, with something undefinable and wild in their dusky depths; the lips were firmly drawn over the teeth, which gave to her whole face an expression of tragic resolution.

"You can drive back home. I will not need you any more tonight," she said to the driver, and without heeding the man's evident astonishment she opened the gate and entered the park, followed by Irene.

A few minutes later they were within the western wing, and were welcomed by the three watchers for whom the hours had passed with dreary slowness.

"How is Marie?" was Irene's first question.

"She is still the same, yet from certain signs I think she will soon awaken."

"Then she——"

"Yes, if things go according to the usual way, Madame du Terrail will have a few moments of silence during which she may be able to tell us the story of her captivity."

Lady Hilton had not pronounced a word and had simply bowed in answer to the others' greetings; then she walked to the bed and gazed on Marie, whose face lay bathed in the white light of the moon shining through the open window. She had known Marie so little that it was impossible for her to recognize in this wreck of humanity the once envied Marquise du Terrail. But she did not doubt Irene's words.

She stood there, calm in her stony despair, thinking of the bliss of which she had hoped, and of the tragic awakening at the very moment when she thought herself sure of happiness. So absorbed was she in her thoughts that she no longer saw those assembled around the bed. All she could see was the ghost-like face before her; all she could hear was the heavy breathing of the dying woman.

No one spoke to her, for all felt that she needed to be alone with her thoughts. With a despair like hers, words of sympathy could not bring relief, and expressions of pity would only be an added wound to her heart.

The woman on the bed was moving uneasily; her eyelids fluttered, then opened, and she looked wonderingly at the eager faces that surrounded the bed.

Irene, as pale as the dying woman, bent forward and questioned breathlessly:

"Marie, do you know me?"

"Irene," murmured the Marquise du Terrail, and her eyes closed again as though this effort had cost her all her remaining strength.

Major Leblanc drew near and, raising her head, forced a few drops of cordial between her lips. She drank it eagerly, then lay still with closed eyes. The Major, by a gesture, ordered Irene to remain silent while the medicine took effect.

After a while a few tears passed Marie's closed lids and rolled down the hollow cheek; then, opening her eyes again, she extended her hand toward her friend, saying:

"Let me press your hand again, Irene; it will be for the last time, for the deliverance of death is at hand."

With a sob Irene took the emaciated hand in hers, and as she pressed it she murmured brokenly:

"My poor Marie, how you must have suffered!"

The ghost of a smile curled the lips of the dying, and Marie said: "You cannot guess how much."

For a while she did not speak, but it was easy to see that the brain, inactive for so long, was trying to pierce the clouds which obscured it. Those about the bed held their breath as though they feared that the slightest noise might hinder the mysterious process of returning intelligence.

Suddenly a wild horror painted itself on the unearthly face, and with a gesture of boundless terror Marie murmured:

"Oh, God, I remember it all!"

Irene bent forward eagerly and said:

"Tell us, let us know the truth, that those who made you suffer may be punished as they merit."

These words seemed to give strength to the dying woman, for she said:

"Yes, you are right; vengeance not only for me, but for him who, in the full splendor of youth, with love opening before him, was cut down without mercy, coldly murdered to serve the ends of his heartless assassin."

She passed her hand over her brow and continued:

"Lift me up a little, Irene, so that, while I speak, I may bid my last farewell to the world and see for the last time the outlines of those trees, which have been the mute witnesses of the martyrdom of my life."

They obeyed her wish. The slight exertion left her without strength to speak, and for a while she remained with closed eyes, breathing heavily. The doctor gave her more cordial, and it at once infused momentary strength to her worn-out body. Opening her eyes she looked out into the night and, addressing herself as much to the old oaks as to her listeners, she began the story of her sufferings.

"I will begin with my marriage, for this, in a certain measure, has shaped the latter half of my life. I never loved my husband, as my heart at the time belonged to another."

She turned to Irene, and continued sadly:

"I can tell you his name now, Irene, for death in stilling my heart gives me the right to reveal its secret. I loved your brother."

"What! Raoul?" exclaimed Irene, surprised.

"Yes, Raoul D'Oban, a man who never seemed to notice me, who always treated me as a little girl. Yet I loved him, in spite of his indifference, maybe because of it. You so often spoke of his courage, his kindness and devotion to you, that naturally my famished heart turned toward him with all the passion of one who has never been able to give free play to tender sentiments. I never had any hope that he would return my love, yet the thought of marrying some one else filled me with despair. But my father forced me and I became Madame du Terrail."

She had spoken slowly and painfully, but at the last words her voice broke and she was forced to pause. After some moments of rest she resumed:

"I must hurry, for I still have much to say, and my life is ebbing rapidly away. I will not dwell on the suffering and revolt which filled the first year of my marriage. While to the world the Marquis appeared to be an ideal husband, he was, in the privacy of home life, a despot and a coward. His passion disgusted me and the hypocrisy of his soul nauseated my heart. I had no love for him in the first place, but later the low depravity of his nature changed his indifference into hate. He knew this, but seemed to enjoy my revolts, for the more I repulsed him the more he desired me.

"So, to deaden the moral abasement, I let other men court me. I saw their attentions and knew what they meant, yet I did not discourage them, for in the unhealthy state of my soul I felt the need of excitement. At times, I can tell you now, my longing to break through the chains of my misery made me almost willing to accept any life, were it guilty or otherwise, only to escape the ceaseless agony of the one I was leading."

Once more she was forced to pause, and Irene looked toward Lady Hilton to see what effect these words had upon her. Judith had not moved, but supported herself by holding to the bedpost, and her eyes did not leave the face of the dying woman. That she suffered was clearly denoted by the contraction of the features, yet the firmness of her lips and the frown on her brow proved that she was not a woman to succumb to pain. But Marie was speaking, and Irene turned again to the bed.

"I was so unhappy in my ill-mated union that when Marguerite told me the secret of her love for Lucian de Lorgnac I promised to aid them in their love affair, for I did not want to see another woman dragged into the whirlpool of misery in which I felt myself sinking. I consented to help them, but I first asked my husband's permission. Little as I loved him, my pride as a virtuous woman forbade me to give him the chance of ever doubting me. He gave his consent, then I felt perfectly safe in allowing and even encouraging de Lorgnac's visits, that I might offer him my sympathy and also give him the chance of meeting Marguerite under my roof."

She uttered a half sob, and as her eyes took a haunted, terrified expression, she continued in low, frightened tones, as though the horror of the scene still lingered with her:

"I have now reached the most painful part of my story, for it nearly caused my death and left my brain a blank. It was the afternoon of the day on which we were to give the ball that was to close the hunting season of that year. I was walking with Marguerite in the park while we were waiting for de Lorgnac. He was to come by the little gate not far from the summer house. Suddenly we were joined by my husband, and he, turning to Marguerite, remarked:

"'I fear that you will not see the Comte today, Mademoiselle Marguerite, since D'Arville, who has just arrived, told me he met him at the station and saw him taking the train for Paris.'

"We were both surprised and disappointed, since this was the last day of Marguerite's stay at the castle. I saw that Marguerite was about to cry, so to give her a chance to hide her disappointment I said to her:

"'You had better go back to the castle, dear, and rest up for tonight. The Marquis and I will soon follow you.'

"'That is just what I was going to advise,' remarked my husband, and Marguerite left us.

"We walked on and soon reached the summer house, where, to my surprise, I saw Lucian de Lorgnac waiting. Du Terrail seemed surprised, for he cried:

"'How's this! You here? Why, D'Arville told me you had gone to Paris.'

"It was Lucien's turn to be surprised, and he said he had not been to the station for several weeks. The Marquis was thoughtful for a minute or so, then exclaimed:

"'Ah! I have it. We've sent Mademoiselle de La Monte back to the castle, and as you can't come by the front door, we may take a secret passage that starts from the summer house and leads to the castle. Once there, I will descend and inform Mademoiselle Marguerite that you are waiting for her. Thus D'Arville's stupid mistake will not cause you to lose your interview with your lady love.'

Here Marie shivered and asked for a little cordial. When they had complied with her wish she continued in stronger tones:

"We followed him, though I was afraid of the dark and gloomy passage into which we entered. Unconsciously I huddled close to de Lorgnac, and he, man-like, laughed at my fears. After a time we reached a door which opened into this very room. Du Terrail did not explain in what part of the castle we found ourselves, but left us at once, saying he was going to get Marguerite.

"I took a seat and Lucien, standing before me, turned his back to the door through which my husband had disappeared, thus partly hiding the door from my view. What followed I can't clearly remember, but all at once I saw my husband standing behind de Lorgnac with a dagger in his uplifted hand; the next moment my cloth dress was dyed scarlet and Lucien with one low moan dropped to the floor. I must have fainted, though at the time I had the sensation that fright had killed me."

She was terrible to behold as she pronounced these words, for the remembrance of past terrors brought to her face the tragic expression of fear which must have greeted the murderer's eyes after his bloody work was completed. Her emotion was so great that Major Leblanc said:

"You had better rest for a few minutes, Madame du Terrail, for this emotion is too strong for you."

But Marie sadly shook her head as she answered:

"I have no time for rest, for the icy hand of death is already grasping my heartstrings. I must speak now or never; the silence of eternity will soon seal my lips forever.

"How long I remained unconscious I do not know, but when I again opened my eyes it was day, the sun shone brightly in the room, and by its light I saw beside me Lucien de Lorgnac's bloody corpse. In trying to rise my hand touched his frozen one and I suppose that this icy contact completed the wreck of my reason, since after that I remember nothing. Years may have passed, or only days but to me life ended the morning after the crime. If they ill-treated me I can't tell, though a vague recollection of enduring intense cold and sultry heat haunts my brain like the remembrance of a half-forgotten dream."

She sank back on her pillows. A cold sweat lay on her brow, while her bosom rose and fell in uneven gasps. Major Leblanc drew Irene aside and said:

"The agony will begin in a few minutes. If you have anything to tell her, any farewells to make, better do so at once, for within an hour at the uttermost she will be dead."

With a sob Irene returned to the bed. Marie had turned her face to the window and in a sad farewell look was gazing on the band of starry sky and the noble heads of the oaks to be seen from where she lay. Irene seized the hand that lay on the covers. The touch of those fingers pressing hers caused Marie to once more turn toward her friend.

"I have a question to ask you, Irene. What explanation did the Marquis du Terrail give for our disappearance?"

Irene hung her head, but did not reply, and Marie continued, as a pained expression came over her face:

"Your silence answers me. I have guessed rightly; he told the world that I ran away with his victim."

For answer Irene pressed the hand she held in hers, and in the same weary voice whose feeble accents had not the strength to express the indignation which filled her soul, Marie resumed:

"Yes, while I was held captive here, and while he lay mouldering in his unmarked grave, before the world we were branded with the stigma of shame—I as the faithless wife, he as the false friend. And who is the one du Terrail has chosen to take my place? for it was that he might marry again that he thus rid himself of me."

Irene was going to answer, but Lady Hilton replied for her:

"The Marquis du Terrail is still unmarried."

Irene understood that Judith could not bear the shame of standing before the first wife and being forced to own that she had been duped by the man she had so passionately loved. Pitying the other's agony, Irene said:

"Lady Hilton has answered for me; the Marquis du Terrail has not married again."

Marie had turned toward Judith when she had spoken, but her dormant brain could not think out the reason why the brilliant Lady Hilton should be there by her bedside. With a sigh she gave it up, and said:

"It is a relief to know that no trusting woman has been deceived by the one who ruined my life. Now one more question—what has become of Marguerite?"

"She has married the man her father wished her to."

"Poor girl!" murmured Marie, as she thought of the result of her loveless marriage with du Terrail.

"Do not pity her, Marie, for she loves him."

A flash of life chased for an instant the glassy darkness of death which was settling in Marie's eyes, and with her remaining strength she cried:

"Ah! nothing but misery and misfortune are stable in this world. Oaths of love, promises of friendship—these are nothing, for they are pronounced today and forgotten tomorrow. Poor, poor Lucien!"

After that she sank rapidly. Irene tried to make her speak, but she remained silent, answering her questions only by a weak pressure of the hand, which later became the spasmodic movements of approaching death. The eyes glazed over, the breath came less frequently from the colorless lips, the form stiffened and straightened, and just as the first rays of the rising sun appeared above the tree-tops, with one last quiver and a long-drawn sigh the Marquise du Terrail breathed her last.

Look in next week's issue of the Ledger for the continuation of this extremely interesting story. Also, look at pages thirteen and fifteen for our announcement relative to free cameras and patterns for all subscribers.

About American Women.

"American women pride themselves on being adaptable," says an English writer. "It is the secret of their success, but it is also the secret of their failure to influence English society at all definitely. It is we who assimilate them, not they us. London is rather intolerant of nonconformity and the American colony, knowing it, hastens to conform. American women talk politics and horseracing—subjects you hear mentioned in a house on Fifth avenue about as often as Chinese conchology—as though they had studied them all their lives. They drop the conventionalism and "fussiness" of New York hospitality and learn to entertain more as a matter of course, with the ease and unconsciousness that English women acquire insensibly. Some of them become more English than ourselves."

—

"The Chinese lady dresses better than the American, but her styles have been much the same for thousands of years," said a Chinaman to a magnificently clad American woman, as quoted by the author of "As a Chinaman Saw Us." He makes other interesting criticisms as well. He says that it is supposed to add to the charm of the Chinese woman to cripple herself with bandaged feet and then goes on horseback about the evil effect of the corset habit. He also draws some parallels between the varying standards used by the American women on the bathing beach and in society.

—

Dr. Emil Reich, whose book, "Success Among Nations," is still new, makes a fling at the American woman. "There is probably little exaggeration," says he, "in saying that the burden of latent contempt heaped by the gentry in England upon the middle class is in America heaped by woman upon man. In both cases we meet with the same passive acceptance, the same absence of all spirit of revolt. This cultivation of fierce energy by woman bids fair to culminate finally in her physical breakdown."

And the Divorce Judge.

"I see," said the fortune teller, as she closed her eyes and gazed into the henceness of the hither, "a marriage for you within three months."

The fair maid blushed with delight.

"And will I be happy?" she asked.

The fortune teller peered a few peers farther into the misty subsequent.

"That," she replied, "will depend on what sort of an impression you make on the jury."

Opposed to It.

LaMontt—Why is Harker going around shouting for Russia? I thought he was a Japanese sympathizer.

LaMoyne—He was until his wife wanted $10 for a Japanese kimono and then he ripped around and said he wouldn't have anything Japanese in the house.

AS EASY

Needs Only a Little Thinking.

The food of childhood often decides whether one is to grow up well nourished and healthy, or weak and sickly from improper food.

It's just as easy to be one as the other provided we get a proper start.

A wise physician like the Denver Doctor who knew about food, can accomplish wonders provided the patient is willing to help and will eat only proper food.

Speaking of this case the Mother said her little four-year-old boy was suffering from a peculiar derangement of the stomach, liver and kidneys and his feet became so swollen he couldn't take a step. "We called a Doctor who said at once we must be very careful as to his diet, as improper food was the only cause of his sickness. Sugar especially he forbid.

"So the Dr. made up a diet and the principal food he prescribed was Grape-Nuts, and the boy, who was very fond of sweet things, took the Grape-Nuts readily without any sugar. (Dr. explained that the sweet in Grape-Nuts is not at all like cane or beet sugar, but is the natural sweet of the grains.)

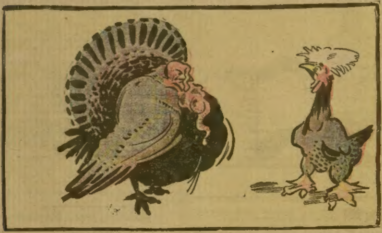
"We saw big improvement inside a few days and now Grape-Nuts are almost his only food and he is once more a healthy, happy, rosy-cheeked youngster with every prospect to grow up into a strong, healthy man." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

The sweet in Grape-Nuts is the Nature-sweet known as Post Sugar, not digested in the liver like ordinary sugar, but predigested. Feed the youngsters a handful of Grape-Nuts when Nature demands sweet and prompts them to call for sugar.

There's a reason.

Get the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in each package.

AN INCIDENT OF FOWLDOM.



The Rooster—Had my fortune told today.
The Gobbler—What did she tell you?
The Rooster—To look out for dark complected men, that they were my enemies.

A Wonderful Chance for Live Men Everywhere.

If there are any of the readers of this paper who would be interested in a clean, legitimate, high class proposition that will earn for them anywhere from $20.00 to $50.00 per week, please ask them to cut this notice out and mail itto us. We will send them full particulars of our offer which is very unusual and will appeal to ambitious men everywhere. No matter what your present occupation may be, it will pay you to investigate our offer. This is no cheap fake or unreliable proposition, we do not offer something for nothing; we have no extravagant claims to make, we don't want to sell you an "outfit," but the proposition we have for an energetic, ambitious man who is willing to give a fair measure of work for good pay, better than he could earn at almost anything else, is such that we advise every man to write us. Our proposition cannot be satisfactorily presented in a small notice, but if you are interested, want to improve your present position and get into a high class paying business, don't hesitate, but cut this notice out and mail to us today with your name and address. Address

AMERICAN WOOLEN MILLS COMPANY.
Washington Blvd. and Union St., Chicago, Ill.

His View of It.

Mrs. Thinkhard—Of late years the spread of intelligence among all classes has been simply wonderful.

Old Bachelor—Yes. I notice there has been a great falling off in the number of marriages.

Possible Explanation.

Tom—Old Gotrox is getting to be quite absent-minded.

Jack—He is, eh?

Tom—Yes. I asked for his daughter's hand last night and he gave me his foot.

The Fate of Tantalus.

Mrs. Scribbler (impressively)—Whatever you do, never marry a newspaper man.

School Chum—Why not?

"I married one, and I know. Every night my husband brings home a big bundle of newspapers from all over the country, and they most drive me crazy."

"The newspapers?"

"Indeed they do. They are just crammed with the most astonishing bargains, in stores a thousand miles away."

Whyness of the Wherefore.

Longleigh—So you have ceased to call on Miss de Coyne, have you?

Shortun—Yes; I don't like her old pirate of a father.

Longleigh—Old pirate of a father?

Shortun—That's what I said. He's a regular old freebooter; the last time I was there he kicked me down the front steps.

Tried to Brace Up.

Wife—You've been drinking! And you told me you were going to a prayer meeting!

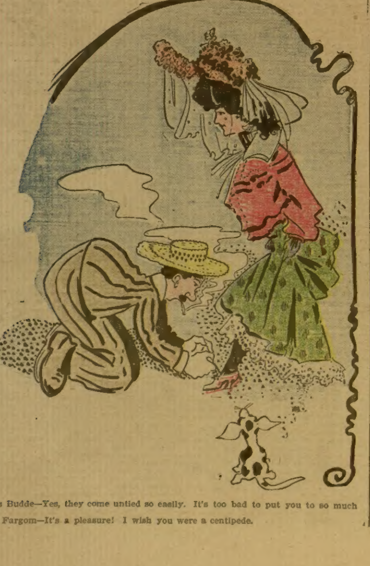
Husband—Y-e-s, m' dear, I wash delayed at zhe prayer meeting and I—hic—knew you'd make a big fuss 'bout my—hic—comin' home s' late, and I—I—hic—tried to brace up for zhe ordeal.

Proper Place.

"Look here, jailer," said the transient guest at the police station, "this place isn't fit to keep a hog in."

"This place isn't intended for hogs," replied the keeper of the boys. "We send them to the pen. See?"

THOSE OXFORD TIES.



Miss Budde—Yes, they come untied so easily. It's too bad to put you to so much trouble.

Mr. Fargom—It's a pleasure! I wish you were a centipede.

Why He Kept Silent.

American Host—It seems to me a rather singular fact that in all your conversations you have never mentioned Goethe.

German Guest—Vell, you see how id is. If I bronounce his name as you Americans bronounce id, my Sherman friendts vill laugh at me; und if I bronounce id gorrectly, my American friendts vill nod know who I am dalking aboud.

As to Future Scraps.

"How do you suppose they will fight a hundred years hence?" asked the bartender.

"How will who fight?" queried the sporty policeman.

"Pugilists," explained the mixicologist. "Will they use bare mouths or telephones?"

Statistics Again.

Mrs. Strongmind—The fact that many companies refuse to insure women is an outrage. I heard today of a town in which there are sixty-two widows and only fourteen widowers. What does that prove?

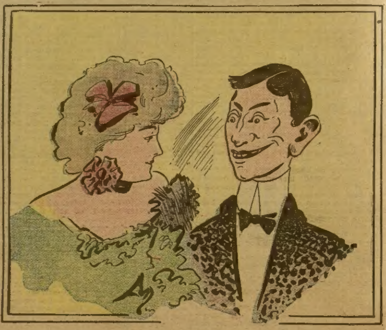
Mr. S.—That seems to prove that most of the widowers have run away from the widows.

Blissful Ignorance.

"Women," remarked the old bachelor, "care nothing for art as a rule."

"Oh, they don't, eh?" sneered the man who had been up against the matrimonial game for seven long years. "You evidently don't know the first principles of the feminine make-up."

CHARACTER READING.



Miss Merton—Do you know some people can form a pretty good opinion of a girl's character by the way she holds her hands?

Mr. Sanford—Really; well, it is possible. I can do the same by the way I hold them.

MINISTER'S TRIAL

Coffee Hit Him Hard Indeed.

A minister of the gospel writes about Postum: "I was for years a sufferer from headaches; sometimes they were so violent that, groaning in agony, I would pace the floor or garden holding my throbbing head for relief.

"I tried all sorts of remedies known to the allopathic and homeopathic schools. Sometimes I thought it was caused by the stomach or biliousness and again I would suspect it was purely nervousness and treated myself accordingly, but nothing ever gave me permanent relief. Having to appear before the public nearly every night, it was sometimes almost impossible for me to fulfill my engagements. Finally a came to suspect that the use of tea and coffee had something to do with my disorder and abruptly discontinued the use of both and took on Postum for a trial.

"From that happy hour I commenced to mend; gradually I got better and better and now I do not have a headache once in 6 months and all my other troubles are gone, too. I am now using Postum exclusively and want no better beverage.

"I know of others who have been benefited by the use of Postum in place of coffee. A friend of mine here in Key West, a hardware merchant, suffered for years with stomach and other troubles while he was using coffee; finally he quit and began using Postum and got well. He is devoted to Postum and when worn and weary with business cares takes a cup of it piping hot and in a short time feels rested and nourished.

"Some I know have become prejudiced against Postum because careless or ignorant cooks tried to make it as they would coffee and will not allow it to boil full 15 minutes, but when they try it again, well boiled, it stays, for it is as delicious and snappy as the mild, smooth, high grade Java." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Get the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in each package.

Drawing the Line.

Typer (angrily)—I'd just like to know what you call that butter you sent to my house?

Grocer—That's print butter.

Typer—It is, eh? Well, I'm a printer myself, and I suppose I might stand butter that suggests a composing room, but I'll be hanged if I'll eat butter that tastes like a pressroom.

An Unappreciated Game.

(Little boy in hammock, and another standing some distance off, crying. Father talking to the boy in the hammock.)

Father—What is Willie crying about?

Johnnie—He says he don't like this game.

Father—Well, what are you playing?

Johnnie—We are playing that this hammock is a steamboat.

Father—Well, why is not Willie in it, too?

Johnnie—We are playing that he missed the boat.—Life.

Then and Now.

"Matches," remarked the sentimental female, 'are made in Heaven."

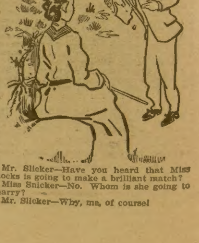
"Perhaps they were in former years," rejoined the practical young man, "but that must have been before the match trust was organized."

Just an Average Boy.

Guest (at summer resort)—Yes, Johnny is a vigorous boy. He seems to be able to eat anything.

Proprietor—I've noticed that he seems to be able to eat everything.

From His Standpoint.



Mr. Slicker—Have you heard that Miss Rocks is going to make a brilliant match?

Miss Snicker—No. Whom is she going to marry?

Mr. Slicker—Why, me, of course!

An Artful Mistake.

"You say the thoughtless act of Mrs. Stingyleigh caused her husband a serious relapse? What did she do, in Heaven's name?"

"Why, she came right into the sick room arrayed in a very expensive hat and dress!"

Still Able to Attend to Business.

"I told Uncle Simon that he was getting too old and feeble to attend to business."

"Did he take it kindly?"

"He threw me out of his office."

Ladies, Preserve Your Youthful Appearance.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the fact and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results.

Send ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

Naming the Picture.

The artist was of the impressionist school. He had just given the last touches to a purple and blue canvas, when his wife came into the studio.

"My dear," said he, "this is the landscape I wanted you to suggest a title for."

"Why not call it 'Home'?" she said, after a long look.

"'Home'? Why?"

"Because there is no place like it," she replied, meekly.

Doubtful Compliment.

Miss Gabbleton—So Mr. Coldcash paid me a compliment, did he?

Miss Caustique—Yes; his attention was attracted to your mouth, and he said it was simply immense.

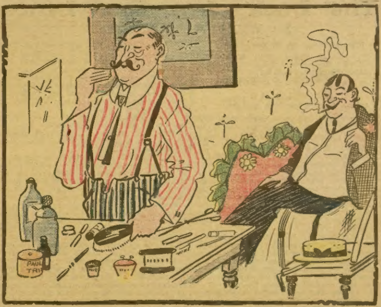
Artless Art.

Brushly—DeAuber got $25 for a little drawing he made last night.

Palette—So! What did he draw?

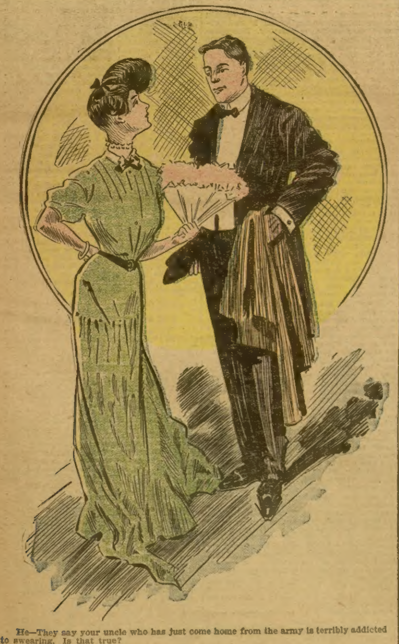
Brushly—Three aces and a pair of kings.

THE WITTY FRIEND.



"Yes," apologetically says the man at the dressing table, "I've had to begin dyeing my hair and mustache."

"I think you began too late with your hair," comments the witty friend. "Looks to me as if most of it had died of itself."



He—They say your uncle who has just come home from the army is terribly addicted to swearing. Is that true?

Well, you know how our parrot would swear?

He—Yes.

She—When Uncle Henry first came here he made a few remarks near the bird, and it came over toward him and said: "Say, you better get in this cage. I've lost my job."

More Dangers Threaten.

Mrs. De Style—What are you studying so deeply?

Daughter—I have become an anarchist, and I'm trying to learn how to make bombs.

"O-oo! Horrors!"

"Must do it. Civilization is all wrong."

"Mercy! Of what do you complain?"

"By the time a man is able to support a girl in the style to which she has been accustomed, he is as old as her father."

A Journalistic Danger.

Lady—I am the wife of the editor of the Daily Blanket, and he promised me that he would see you about his health. Did he call?

Dr. Hardhead—Yes, madam. I find that he is suffering from brain strain.

"Must he stop work?"

"Oh, no. All he need do is to cease trying to write on both sides of a question in the same article."

He Told Her the Worst.

"Doctor," said the beautiful young woman who had become the wife of a rich old man, "tell me the worst. I will be brave and try to bear it."

Leading her gently from her suffering husband's bedside, the doctor answered:

"Nerve yourself, then, for a terrible shock. He's going to get well."

Cause and Effect.

"I say, waitah," said the Anglomaniac guest in a swell cafe, "bring me a copy of—aw—London Punch, doncher know."

"Here it is, sir," answered the waiter. "At what hour shall I wake you?"

His Private Opinion.

Mrs. Enpeck—Here's a story about a man who actually sold his wife. Now what do you think of that?

Enpeck—Oh, there are some fools in the world who will buy any old thing.

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FREE GOLD WATCH This watch has SOLID GOLD LAID ENGRAVED CASE, AMERICAN MOVEMENT, fully warranted to keep correct time, equal in appearance to SOLID GOLD WATCH guaranteed 25 years. We give it ABSOLUTELY FREE to boys and girls or anyone selling 20 pieces of our handsome jewelry at 10c each. Send your address and we will send jewelry postpaid; when sold, send us $2 and we will POSITIVELY SEND you the WATCH and CHAIN. LIBERTY JEWEL CO., Dept. 264 CHICAGO

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$3 a Day Sure Send us your address and we will show you how to make $3 a day absolutely sure; we furnish the work and teach you free, you work in the locality where you live. Send us your address and we will explain the business fully, remember we guarantee a clear profit of $3 for every day's work, absolutely sure. Write at once. ROYAL MANUFACTURING CO., Box 1101, Detroit, Mich.

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FREE GOLD WATCH AND RING An American movement watch with Solid Gold Plated Case, fully warranted to keep correct time, equal in appearance to a Solid Gold Filled Watch warranted 25 years. Also a Solid Rolled Gold Zambesi Diamond Ring, sparkling with the fiery brilliancy of a $50 diamond, are given absolutely Free to Boys & Girls or anyone for selling 20 pieces of our handsome jewelry at 10c each. Send your address and we will send you the jewelry postpaid, when sold send us $2, and we will send you both watch and ring, also a chain. BOND JEWELRY CO., Dept. 24 CHICAGO.

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THE CHILDREN'S CHOICE.

"George Washington, the greatest man that ever lived," said Merry. "And he never told a lie," in a half whisper.

"Don't you believe it. He did. Every one tells lies, only some get sorry afterward and some don't," said eight-year-old Cousin Otto.

"You naughty boy! Shame!"

"Not ashamed, either. Guess my father is the best man that ever lived, and he said he told a lie once."

"But haven't you heard the story about the cherry tree and the hatchet?" asked Merry.

"Yes, ever since I was born."

"Well?"

"Well? He didn't say he never told a lie; just 'I cannot tell a lie,' and neither could you, if you had your hatchet in your hand and the tree right there, broken, and your father standing over you."

"Well, never mind. There's Cousin Bill. Aren't you glad he was invited to the party?" exclaimed Merry.

"Oh, goody! Let's run down the hill to meet him, and say, Merry, I do love George Washington, heaps. He was a good, brave man, and I'm mighty glad we own a flag and that I could help to hang it out for him."

It was Washington's Birthday, and Auntie May had invited all her little nephews and nieces to spend the day with her on the big farm. Such a jolly day it was, outside and in! There were big log fires where the red flames flew up the chimney in all sorts of fairy shapes, and Auntie May thought it great sport to play hide-and-seek and tag through the big halls with the children. The snow was so deep that even the sleigh that brought them from the railroad station would sink into the drifts, way down deep. And sleds? Of course! Auntie May had a barn full of sleds just waiting to be used.

There was to be a grand supper at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and the children were to elect one boy of the party to play he was George Washington. But he would have to be a good, brave boy, Auntie May said.

Otto knew, for he had helped, that the make-believe George Washington was going to sit at one end of the table and was going to give each guest a beautiful American flag and a soldier cap, and then they were to sing "Our Bonny Flag" and "The Star Spangled Banner." There were to be heaps of things on the table, all red, white and blue, and, best of all, Auntie May would tell them a story.

After the nicest kind of a warm luncheon all the children took sleds and went out to coast down the hill. Otto, resting on the top of the hill, was wondering who would be chosen for George Washington. "I couldn't be," he said to himself, "for there were Farmer Fiddlestick's apples. I did tell afterward, but there is the lie. Most any of the others could be and I'll vote for Tom. He is the boy who ought to be George Washington." Then Otto went flying down hill on runners.

Just as he reached the road, Marie's pet dog, dear little deaf Bobby, with the stump tail, came running from the house and crouched in the middle of the road to chew a bone. Farmer Slocum's horses were coming down the hill so fast that Otto was sure Bobby would be crushed.

"But they might run over me," and the next moment Otto had snatched the dog up and was turning back when he stumbled, fell, and a runner of the big sleigh scratched through his shoe. The children saw it, and so did Auntie May, but soon Otto was on Auntie's couch, smiling at her jokes, for salve and soft rags were fast making the foot well. Auntie May's quick ear caught some whispers in the hall that Otto did not hear. "Yes, he did tell a story, but he told on himself, you know, and paid for the apples out of his own spending money, and couldn't buy candy for a whole week!"

The door opened, "just for a peep," and seven heads pushed in.

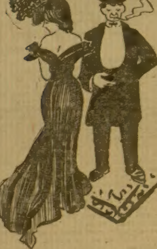
"Does it hurt much, Otto?" they asked.

"No, and Auntie May says if I stay here quietly for another hour I may be able to have another coast before supper."

Seven happy faces nodded at each other and at Bobby, who was on the couch beside Otto.

"And say, Otto," said curly-headed Edith, "we've 'nanimously 'lected you George Washington," and the door closed almost in the middle of Otto's "Thank you."

His Function.



He—He's put a good many to sleep in his time.

She—Doctor or pugilist?

He—Neither; he's a preacher.

IN MASQUERADE

—on—

The Luck of a Free Lance

By WILLIAM R. EYSTER.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

MRS. MARCHMONT'S DOUBLE.

My profession had made me cool to look over a crowd and quick to take in faces. Few untried soldiers plunging to the heart of a melee could have seen as much.

The woman was neither dead nor fainting. As I looked she wrenched her wrist loose and threw both hands up against Whetstone's throat with desperate energy, thrusting him back and away. Then she looked over into the moil and saw my face. What she must have thought I never could guess; but she knew me at once as I came bursting in at the head of my little squadron.

"Help, O'Rourke! Help me!" she shouted.

"Sure, an' Oi'm coming!" I cried back, hoarse with excitement; and just then men on the outside began to fire on us out of the windows. At the same time another squad charged around from behind the buildings which had concealed them.

The enemy had come in force, expecting to be able to overcome any little army they might find at the ranch of Don Domingo. We were outnumbered two or three to one, but I never doubted we could more than hold our own; and Domingo with his following was yet to arrive. It was Whetstone I wanted to reach; and before I could cut my way to the door he had staggered out of sight with his burden, and the heavy oak was slammed in my face.

As this is the hardest to describe, it was also the hardest of our battles. We had little benefit of surprise; our force was outnumbered, and the advantage of position was in every respect with our adversaries. If this had been our maiden baptism of fire we would have fallen back after the first clash and waited for re-enforcements. Had even fifty of the peon soldiery of the country been alone at my back they would not have stood a moment where my high-bred dozen held its own.

At the same time, the enemy was more for sound and fury than real damage. Half of my men were wounded, one or two of them down, but by the noise of the conflict and the bitterness with which the enemy fought we should have been annihilated.

Of a sudden, a shout of dismay arose, the foe broke away retreating singly and in squads, while in the lull which followed I flung myself against the door. The retreat was caused by the yelling advent of Domingo and his force. Jussac and at least half of our dozen followed in pursuit; the new arrivals for the most part joining him, though a score were left to follow me as I burst into the building.

Had those inside come to the point of attack and concentrated their fire on us, we might have had a hot time in the old house that night; but, imagining themselves deserted, they were all for escape, and for the most part were already getting out by the rear.

Whetstone had no chance save to go with the rest, but he was in no mind to abandon his captive. I have already said he was a powerful man, yet he found it no easy task to force her along. She caught at a door post when she could not beat him off, and there clung with the energy of despair.

As I rushed toward them I gave point right over her shoulder; if he had not loosened his hold, and swiftly leaped back, my thrust would have reached his face. She lost no time, but sprang behind me; when I leaped through the doorway I found Whetstone in front of me, a sword in his hand. I laughed at that, and with blade extended sprung at him. I did not care how good his fance; just then I had the supreme confidence of a lifetime and knew he must go down.

A light came full through the doorway, falling upon him where my body did not shade, and I saw his face working with passion as steel clashed against steel. He did not give me time to fairly begin an attack, but, disengaging, thrust furiously.

A parry, a twist of the wrist, and his sword flew out of his hand. I recovered swiftly for a thrust, but at the instant he discharged a revolver full in my face, and then turned and fled. Behind him a dozen men were bursting into the room and his hope was over.

Perhaps he was more or less bewildered. He sprung recklessly at a window, and went through, taking sash and all, but still clutching his revolver and firing at a man who rose up in front of him.

That man was Jussac, who dodged at the flash and at the same time ran his sword through the villain. That settled Marcus Whetstone permanently, and left his wife, if he had one, a widow—though I did not then think of that.

Whetstone's bullet had just grazed my head. Though blinded by the flash I was not in the least harmed, even if I did stagger back. The instant I could recover I ran to the window, and was in time to see his final downfall.

Our men outside had made some captures and some corpses, but I saw they were scattering in pursuit of the fugitives. Fortunately there was a bugle with my command, and the comrade to whose back it was strapped was with Jussac. I ordered the recall, and then went out to find my horse, if he was still living, and set my lines in order.

I met Marchmont and his wife coming up for the shelter of the house.

"Sure, an' there's an'ither av yez insoide; mayhap ye had betther see av she belongs to the same brood."

As I spoke I gave a twist of the thumb and a queer wrench to my mouth. Mrs. Marchmont understood fast enough, and uttered a great cry of joy as she hastened away. Whatever the mystery was, it evidently all belonged to the same family.

It did not take long to get my army in shape. I represented Mariano, and was the leader of the expedition. So long as I was on the spot I intended to keep to the front, only subject, to a certain extent, to the orders of Gonzales. The fight put a new face on matters, and I fancied a fresh council of war was in order; though I expected to do as I chose, so soon as I knew my own mind. Outposts were established, prisoners and the wounded looked after, and all made ready to remain or march at a moment's notice. Then I went into the house.

Ostensibly, I was seeking Gonzales; actually, I was showing myself, ready to receive an explanation.

And I got it.

They were all in one room together—Gonzales, Domingo, Mrs. Marchmont, and the second Mrs. Marchmont—who looked like her mother.

I understood it all at last, and certain strange inconsistencies which I had observed were no longer puzzling. Nevertheless, I believe, at that moment, my face was red in spite of myself at the thought that while to Mrs. Marchmont I might always be the dashing soldier of fortune, to her daughter I would represent nothing but the beggar on horseback, the Irish hackdriver who had answered her advertisement for a servant, and who had slept in her stable. If I had not consoled myself with the thought that Algernon Mount Morris—or the man who so masqueraded—was yet to dawn upon her, I do not know what I might not have done.

Marchmont gave no time. He came straight to me without waiting for me to speak.

"There seems to be some sort of a mystery here, no doubt, but you may be sure, my friend, it was not kept up with any idea of deceiving you. My own liberation, and the death of that wretch Whetstone, relieves us from all anxiety or necessity for such a thing, and to you there seems both explanation and apology due."

He had me by the hand, and was talking as though the whole earth would not be too good for me. With unusual modesty I undertook to stop the flow of his words.

"No more, no more. I hope I have done my duty as a gentleman should, and if I have confounded your wife and daughter it was no more than the blunder they seemed to desire."

"Never mind all that. I confess there has been some little mystery left for even me to discover the ins and outs of. Campos, I understand, presented you to my wife; but evidently in some way Leona had met you before, even though she is hardly certain she recognizes you now. To make sure all around let me present you to my oldest daughter. Leona, this is my very good friend, General O'Rourke, to whom, acting under the orders of General Mariano, I am directly indebted for the safety of your mother, whom he has saved several times over. Leona tells me that he had arranged a matter of millions and of governments, and then placed the whole in jeopardy in order to follow his reckless love of adventure—or to be of service to her—she could hardly tell which. But whether financier or soldier, he is worthy to be known, and I hope you will be able to call him friend."

While her father spoke our eyes met frankly and fearlessly. As he ceased she took my hand:

"Considine O'Rourke, the mind of omniscience itself could hardly solve this puzzle without a little inside assistance, but this much I do know—you have been to me as good friend as ever woman had, and whether you be General O'Rourke, or—some one else—it makes no difference. I am proud to acknowledge my indebtedness, and hope some day to prove it."

"That is enough for the present. Where both have been masquerading explanations can surely keep until the present danger is over. Then, if you allow, I will throw myself on your mercy."

"Till then—and I do not think you need fear to find a stern judge."

She smiled, and I knew she had forgotten all about Whetstone.

"Till then," I answered; and our hands fell apart.

I turned to Gonzales:

"General, you can see that full preparations were being made to put down a local uprising—which seems to be all that was anticipated. We only won by striking a night sooner than was anticipated. What desperate effort will be made for your recapture you can imagine. I am willing to stay with you, but frankly admit my belief that instant retreat will be for the best interests of all concerned. This much I do insist on strongly. Mr. Marchmont and his family must be placed in safety while there is yet time. Then, if you choose, I am with you, if it is to take Quezaltepec and march on the capital itself."

"You are right, my friend, as always," replied Gonzales, with a sad shake of the head. "We could not save Domingo's goods, were we to remain and fight ever so hard. His flocks are already scattered toward safety, and we may as well follow on the same road. The time will come when we will be back—you at the head of our cavalry, with Mariano in lead of the army. I can only sorrow that in his love for me my friend may have for the present completely wrecked himself. I am ready to march which way you choose. If they follow they may learn that a fleeing jaguar bites hard."

I knew well enough I could never lead the way into Mexico without a guide; but Joaquin was with us yet, and he knew the tracks and trails of the mountains even better than Ramon the false. I doubted not, also, that Domingo himself could lead us at a pinch. I went out and found Joaquin, who explained the route he believed it best for us to take, and professed himself willing to guide and guarantee the retreat. As we talked the matter over, word came from the outpost nearest Quezaltepec that there was a movement from the town. In fact, a fugitive patriot or two had come in, bearing the intelligence that a reconnoitering party was drawing near, whilst behind them the enemy in force. The army of the revolution had been located definitely at the estanchia of Domingo, and it was to be crushed without delay.

I proposed to move without delay myself. All things were prepared for advance or retreat; and retreat it was.

Hastily I saw the advance guard off, with Gonzales and the Marchmonts in its charge. Come what might, there must be no mistake about their safety. It would have been pleasant enough for me to have been in that first flight, for now I doubted my mind no longer, and it seemed to me the way was opening. I knew if there was one woman in all this world I could adore, I had found her.

Moreover, though she was evidently sure I was the very O'Rourke whom she had employed as her coachman, and rescued again at Havana, she seemed content to believe there was some mystery behind which she could pardon; and that the slashing soldier of fortune she found here was worthy of her friendship, and had a strong claim on her gratitude. I had my regrets that it had after all been her mother who had ridden with me through the dangers along the trail to Quezaltepec; but with a smile I thought I would have all the better friend at court. Though anxious for her safety, I could not help but feel a boyish desire she should see more of the dashing cavalryman, and secretly regretted that prudence prevented waiting for daylight and a spectacle.

However, I had little time for such thoughts, and finally drove them out of my mind altogether, lest they should interfere with the work in hand.

It was quite likely I was not done with the enemy, and though I had every confidence in Jussac, who was taking up the outposts and would follow in command of the small rear guard, and in Joaquin, who was with me as guide in case I lost sight of the advance, still I did not intend to be altogether dependent on them to guard against surprise, or direct our movements.

So we went on for some little time, until there was a sudden crackle of musketry from behind, showing the advance of the enemy was in force and earnest.

Almost at the same moment there was a boom from a small field piece away to the front. Our advance guard had found the road disputed by a strong force, whilst the foe in the rear was closing up. In spite of my fine military preparations we were practically surrounded.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FALL OF A FREE LANCE.

If Baridos directed the movements he showed that he was more than an ordinary strategist, after all. In fact, he had to be to keep in the saddle so many years, in a land where revolutions were more regular than seasons; and generally came, like the earthquakes, without much notice.

In the concentration going on from all sides he expected to find the insurgents in the center—and was not far wrong.

As for the artillery ahead of us, it was but a mountain howitzer of moderate caliber; but if it commanded the pass Joaquin had described to me, and was fairly well served, it might hold us at bay, with such other damage as would work our ruin. What force supported it was a matter of conjecture, but it was fair to guess it was something near our own. Anything less would scarcely be trusted with the gun.

So far as the men in our rear were concerned, our present position was a favorable one, as I could see; and without consultation or loss of time I made my arrangements. I sent an orderly to Jussac, telling him to fall back fighting until he reached the main body under Domingo, where the ground was to be held at all hazards until further orders. Taking a score of Domingo's men, and eight of my original twelve—four of them more or less wounded were in the advance—I rode on against the rising ground, beyond, or at the top of which, we had seen the flash of the gun.

The distance was not great, and it was well that it was so since it gave us the opportunity to take advantage of conditions more profitable than we could have expected.

There was a stiff little war going on in the very flare of a campfire; and the barricade across the trail was even beyond that. I did not know then that the fire had been lighted after the fight began.

It seems the advance of my force blundered right into the stockade itself, and was taken. Two or three of them there were—it made no great difference had not one of them been Domingo himself.

At a distance far enough to be the main body of our fugitives came the rest of the advance; and at them the howitzer was fired, fortunately at an elevation so great no damage was done beyond producing instant confusion, at sight of which the fellows of the barricade set up a yell and charged out to capture or slay.

My four were not in the best condition for fight, but they had been learning war in a practical school, and saw the advantage to be obtained if this rabble could be held there until I came. As to my coming, of course there was no doubt of that.

So it was my men did not retreat, but dodged into the cover of the rocks, scrambling up as best they could, and taking the Marchmonts along with them. They were none too proficient with firearms, as a rule preferring to trust to the steel; but they managed to hold their ground, with much shouting, because of their advantage of position, and kept the enemy blazing away because they had as yet received no damage.

In that way I and my eight came upon them, with a score more of men at our heels who only needed to be led, and were cutting and slashing, and shouting like very devils, and riding through with a great swath left behind, and were over the barricade and sabering the gunners before the howitzer could speak again. It was as pretty a bit of partisan warfare as even Finnicune himself had ever seen; and following the rule of most Spanish-American battles the loss was all on the one side. We had pinned down the fighting men and had the prisoners free before the cavaliers with the ladies could scramble down from their perch and make their way to the spot.

By what I could hear Jussac was hard at work, firing in retreat. Hastily making dispositions to hold the pass, I rode back to him, knowing that if left to himself he was more apt to charge than to fall back, and hoping that the enemy would be inveigled into an ambuscade.

Where Jussac was stationed there was still room for quite a deployment, and the enemy was advancing with the regularity of trained troops. Here, and here, and here, along the line in the semi-darkness, there were now and then spits of flame, each followed by a "Zip!" and a report. They were working up into range with a steadiness I had hardly expected, and I doubted if my men would stand it much longer. I was almost afraid to withdraw them for fear of a rout.

Jussac was there to aid, however; and Jussac caught the situation at once, and was warm to take advantage of it. He, and a man or two he could trust, manipulated the movement, and they broke away in such apparent disorder that the alignment of the enemy went, and they started in headlong pursuit.

It seemed to me you could hear the word "Quarter!" in fourteen languages; and the affair was altogether too realistic for the defenders I had left at the barricade. They were almost ready to fire regardlessly, at friend or foe, in their anxiety to check the seeming panic.

But we reached the fortification in good time, and I saw by the way my men wheeled into line they were enjoying the situation. With his own hands Jussac altered the elevation of the howitzer until it would sweep the road; and I sent a few men farther along the pass to keep up a yelling semblance of flight. At point blank range the gun was discharged, along with a withering fire of small arms, and such confusion as followed was thorough, though it was not certain how long it might last. To render it overwhelming and break up the rearmost ranks, which were only staggered by the recoil of their leaders, we charged around the barricade and broke down into the midst of them.

Woe is me! That was once too often. The pitcher had gone to the well to a supernumary extent. Our steel bit as sharply, the foe fled as promptly; but then one of the wounded lying by the trail-side rose up on his elbow, and either taking good aim or none at all, fired straight at my breast, as, wheeling to the notes of the recall, we rode back in triumph. I fell forward on my horse's neck, with closed eyes and ghastly face, utterly unconscious of all surroundings.

When next I knew a thing, and my eyes opened in true consciousness, I was in Mexico.

The first face I caught sight of was that of Jussac, who was watching me with an anxiety there was no mistaking. I saw his lean features flood with a smile, and I knew I was all right.

"The ladies, Jussac! Tell me that they are safe." It was a buzzing sort of a whisper, which might have been unintelligible to ears less alert, or a mind less acute. He, being a Frenchman, understood of course.

"Surely; else you had not been here—not living, at least. I would have brought your body sure enough; but it was the ladies who kept the life in it. They have left me in charge for a few moments, but she will be back before long."

"Which one, Jussac—which one?"

"Bless me if I know; you will see when she comes. Now, be silent, and recover, and be happy as you please. There is nothing can stop you, in love or war."

The little exertion brought back my weakness, but left me with the mind to contemplate it. With closed eyelids I remembered the past, dreamed of the future, listened to Jussac's low breathing, and waited. After a little she came. No disguise could have befooled me now; and when her cool hand dropped lightly on my forehead I knew it from every other hand in the whole round world.

"Me darlint, av the devotion av a loifetoime——" I began.

"Hush, hush!" she interrupted, in a tone softer and sweeter than I had ever heard from her lips. "Have done with that nonsense. It is useless to keep it up longer. For some days your life was despaired of, and father overlooked your papers to find the address of your friends, or any other thing which should be known. If your name is truly given in the passport you carried—much good would it do you after such frolics as you have been indulging in—you are not so far off from being a relative and once upon a time our fathers were friends."

"I'm not caring for our fathers. It's you and I who are going to decide whether we are going to be friends—and a little more."

"Hush!" she said again, with a blush on her cheek, and a gleam in her eye which I thought I understood. Her fingers rested lightly on my mouth, and when I kissed them softly as a very whisper of love she bent over and touched my forehead with her lips. I was still a man not far from death's door, and in that way she had the maidenly courage to tell me the very truth. After that she sat by my bedside, with my hand in hers, and I peacefully fell asleep. Jussac had fled at her first coming and she had me all to herself.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE END OF THE MASQUERADE.

The actual story of the masquerade might be considered finished with the victory recorded at the close of the last chapter.

I recovered with a rapidity which to Leona seemed little less than alarming. In a week I was on my feet and pressing her to name the happy day. In two we were all flitting north toward San Francisco, where we were joined by Lorena.

There were, however, numerous explanations cropping out from time to time, the gist of which perhaps ought to be given here in small compass for the benefit of the reader. It is easy enough to guess what they were, but people in this practical age desire to know.

I made up a very pretty story for myself. My little story of wealth, which had been largely and miraculously preserved, and the documents with it, went to show not only who I was, but that the application for the position of a servitor must have been but a freak. And a freak I called it. I described how, in a moment of idle listlessness, I had come across the paper, and how I answered in person through a sudden curiosity to see something of the people advertising, but without the least idea of accepting the employment which I did not even dream would be offered.

But, alas! all my life had I been fond of a joke and prone to seek adventure. I was unable to resist the temptation. In my pursuit of her—following to shield from threatened danger—I had stumbled across Campos. The rest of the story she knew better than I did, and I would be much obliged when she told it.

"Father has something to say to you first," was her grave response; and I wondered if the elder gentleman was to formally ask my intentions, or demand that nothing further should be said until the parents had held an interview. I found it was something vastly different, when he more gravely begun:

"I was once compelled to kill a man," he said, "under circumstances which hardly admitted of explanation. Enough that my wife—as true ever to me as ever wife that lived—called on me for aid; and I came.

"I left the corpse where it fell, postponing confession and explanation until the hour of necessity, which I doubted would ever arrive.

"Unfortunately, the villain Whetstone had such garbled evidence as gave him, as he thought, full proof that it was at Lona's hand the wretch died.

"Lona and I left the country; and afterward I became somewhat mixed up in Central American politics, with such disastrous result that I was supposed to be dead, and really was imprisoned. Then Whetstone got upon the track of my wife, and would have married her, either through fear, or that strange influence which is best called hypnotic. He had evidence it was impossible to disprove; and it was then the idea of substitution took possession of Leona. Utterly fearless and unimpressionable herself, she knew she could stand off the ruffian—genteel though he could appear upon occasion—as her mother never could; and if an explosion come to muddle affairs that Lona would escape and she herself eventually go clear. You know something of the contract under which they were married.

"As a consequence, Leona made up older than her years, and Lona renewed her years. Side by side you could scarce tell them apart. Lorena sided in the masquerade, and you were witness how it worked.

"It was but a short time ago they took suspicion of my existence; and through the assistance of Campos planned my rescue. Leona was never on the Panama at all, but sailed to Havana, to follow thence. It was as her late servitor that you were rescued there. She it was who landed at St. Thomas; but it was my wife you there rescued. Leona, coming secretly on the Bonito, remained hidden for a time before communicating with her mother. She spoke to you at Cortez; but it was the mother you escorted to the capital; whilst Leona fearlessly sought Quezaltepec by a more direct route, and found the house of our friend, Don Domingo. It was when you came to the rescue that for the first time she saw you as you were. There is nothing more to tell which you cannot guess. She seems by now to know her own mind fairly well; if, after what I have told you, you are of the same opinion, take her and be happy. Perhaps, though, it would be just as well to communicate with your family before it goes farther. From what you said in your delirium I have an idea your relations with them have been for some time in a strained condition."

If I was of the same opinion? Considering that Leona was there, listening bravely to all of this, the test was rather brutal to both of us. His answer came when he saw her gliding into my arms.

However, for once two young people were willing to take advice, even though it might not be exactly to their rapid tastes. It was on such account that ultimately the prodigal made his appearance at the paternal mansion, full of humility and promises—to be warmly welcomed.

And a little later came Leona.

If you imagine we were compelled to sit down and trust to the generosity of the old folks you are much mistaken. Of course, I told confidentially to Marchmont the whole truth in regard to the "syndicate," but I insisted there was a fortune in the idea I had suggested to the President—and a fortune I made out of it. It is true, Marchmont put in a million; but that was a trifle to the fifty millions which were before long pledged to the scheme of the swash-buckler O'Rourke, whose meteoric flight across the continent, and brilliant feat of arms, will long be remembered in a region he certainly does not case soon to re-visit, notwithstanding the promise of a warm reception by the dignitaries of several nations. He prefers to do the balance of his exploitation from the other end of the line.

In my labors to form the sy[illegible] [illegible]y, Reggie Algire w[illegible] assistance. It turned out that he was the fiancee of Lorena, and general confidant of the feminine members of the family. When I no longer had any use for jealousy I found him a very worthy young man.

As to the revolution, "a part of which I saw, and most of which I was"?

Long afterward I came across a telegram, published in an old newspaper, which explained the facts as seen by native eyes. It read thus.

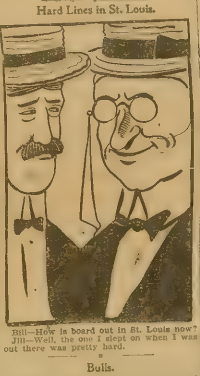
"Tetuphuilla, Mexico, October 9.—General Mariano, Commanding Main Army of Liberation, near San Salvador: We are triumphing. Sixteen thousand heroes in arms assailed the despot, capturing Quezaltepec with great slaughter. Evacuated for strategic reasons. We await your advance.

"GONZALES."

After that there were no further reports of the campaign. Sixteen of us, I know, once rode into Quezaltepec—and rode out again, along with Domingo and a few retainers. I can vouch for the slaughter, and am puzzled to know, beyond the question of the rescue of Marchmont, what it was all about. When I left Tetuphuilla, Gonzales and Mariano had the despot surrounded; but one of them was away to the north, and one of them way away to the south, with a whole sovereign state and several provinces between. So far as I know, that position remains unchanged; and up to the time when Baridos was assassinated I believe there had been no advance. If they delayed for the reappearance of their chief of cavalry the hesitation has become permanent. Jussac returned to France, these many years ago; and I am no longer "in masquerade."

The End.

Hard Lines in St. Louis.



Bill—How is board out in St. Louis now?
Jill—Well, the one I slept on when I was out there was pretty hard.

Bulls.

Numerous specimens of Irish bulls and other bulls are given in Pearson's Magazine. For example, an orator disclaiming against landlords and capitalists, wound up with the following words: "If these men were landed on an uninhabited island they wouldn't be there half an hour before they would have their hands in the pockets of the naked savages!"

In the British Parliament not long ago a member said in debate: "All I ask, Mr. Speaker, is that to my plain question, 'When will the correspondence be published?' I should have a plain answer—'yes' or 'no.'"

A professor of chemistry in lecturing to his class announced: "One drop of this poison placed on the tongue of a cat would be sufficient to kill the strongest man."

Eloquently assailing a taxation scheme, a public speaker declared: "They'll keep cutting the wool off the sheep that lays the golden eggs until they pump it dry."

When selling goods to a customer one day a Dublin shopkeeper said: "It will last you forever, madam, and make you a petticoat afterward.

A speaker said in a public address. "All along the untrodden paths of the future we can see the hidden footprints of an unseen hand!"

This is one from a preacher: "We pursue the shadow, the bubble bursts, it leaves the ashes in our hands."

Merely a Reminder.

"Yas," remarked young DeBorem as the clock chimed the hour of 11 p. m., "I'm—aw—very absent minded, doncher know? I'm always forgetting something that I—aw—ought to wemember."

"I have noticed that," rejoined Miss Caustique, as she vainly tried to strangle a yawn. "You even forget how to tell time by the clock."

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BOYS AND GIRLS CORNER

The Adventures of Tom Dayton;

OR

The Mystery of Dark Hollow.

By Will Lisenbee.

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CHAPTER XIII.

The first thing Tom did after registering and being given a room was to write a number of letters.

He first wrote to Mr. Larkin, detailing the adventures of his trip, and giving an account of his encounter with the tramp.

"It was the same fellow who tried to rob you," he wrote, "and as he succeeded in making his escape, he is still at large. However, the innkeeper at the stage station promised to notify the sheriff, and I hope he may be captured. I have just returned from a visit to my uncle. He received me very kindly and I shall probably return there and spend a few days some time soon. I have made no attempt yet to look after the matter intrusted to me by you, but shall begin at once. I will report the moment I make any discoveries."

He told of his acquaintance with Mr. Mansfield, the merchant, and his family, and how it had been brought about.

"Mr. Mansfield received me very kindly," he continued in his letter, "quite as if I were a hero, all because I had been lucky enough to save his son from being robbed. So you will see that the tramp to whom I am indebted for the friendship to yourself and family has been the means of providing me with friends here. In fact, it seems as if I owe him all the good luck I have had since starting out for myself, and if this sort of thing keeps up it may be to my interest to employ him to follow me about the country as a mascot."

He next wrote to Harry Hale, enclosing the five dollars he had borrowed, and giving an account of some of the adventures which had befallen him since leaving Millville. He also wrote to other schoolmates and by the time he had finished it was noon.

At dinner he met Mr. Funk. The German greeted him cordially, and talked volubly during the meal, but no reference was made to the German's business in Rockville.

About two o'clock Ora came to the hotel and was shown to Tom's room.

There was a look of satisfaction on his face as he came in.

"Tom," he said, "I really believe I am going to be a detective. I have already made some progress on a case."

"Good! I'm glad to hear it," replied Tom. "I am very much interested. Tell me about it."

"It is quite a long story. It had its beginning several months ago. It is about the only thing that has happened in Rockville to create a sensation for a long time. I suppose you have heard of the disappearance of Mortimer Gluck?"

The words struck Tom like an electric shock. Mortimer Gluck was Mr. Larkin's missing partner—the very man whose mysterious disappearance Tom had been sent to Rockville to secretly investigate. As soon as he could recover from his surprise he said:

"Why, yes, I have heard of the case."

"I supposed you had. There has been a great deal in the papers about it. I understand that detectives have been here at work on the case, but there has never been any light thrown on the mystery. Of course I have never breathed it to a soul that I had any designs on it. I am quite sure I should be laughed at by every one in the town if it were known. You know how people would look on a boy who aspired to be a dectetive. Why, they'd put him down as silly. They'd say he had been reading trashy literature till his head had been turned. Now, I am very clear of having done anything of that kind. My theory has always been that those mysteries connected with crime are easy enough of solution if one reasons from the right standpoint. There is nothing strange about anything when it is understood. When we don't understand a thing we say it is strange. Do I tire you?"

"No, indeed," said Tom. "On the contrary, I am deeply interested in every word you say—more interested than you can imagine."

"Thanks. I had an idea you would listen to me. Mortimer Gluck, as you may remember, came to Rockville with a large sum of money—twenty thousand dollars, I think. He had just returned from Colorado where he had disposed of a mine just previous to his starting for this place. He came to the hotel, ate his dinner and went to visit a relative, Silas Baker, who lives just at the outskirts of the town. That is the last that has been heard of him, excepting that he was at the Baker place where he stayed a short time and then started back to the hotel. That is what the Bakers say. But what became of Gluck? No one saw him go to the place and no one saw him leave. That all seems very mysterious, but it is not the business of a detective to look at it in that light, for he either went away or didn't. That needs no demonstration. I say he did not leave the house of the Bakers. That statement requires proof. That is what I shall try to produce.

"Now, this Gluck had a partner by the name of Larkin. Larkin, it seems, had furnished the money to develop the mine sold by Gluck, and was, therefore, according to agreement, half owner in the mine. The mine was sold for twenty thousand dollars. Gluck came from Colorado with the money and was to meet his partner at this place. Gluck arrives a day in advance of the time set for meeting Larkin, and when Larkin arrives Gluck has been here and disappeared.

"A search is made for him, but nothing comes of it. A detective works on the case and discovers no clue. Mr. Larkin offers a reward of a thousand dollars for any information as to the whereabouts of Gluck, but no one has claimed the reward. Some suspected the Bakers of having dealt foully with their relative. Others were of the opinion that Gluck had purposely disappeared to defraud his partner of his just rights, and some were of the opinion that Gluck had lost his mind, wandered away and perhaps committed suicide by throwing himself into the river. But as no body has ever been found there is nothing to support the theory. Let us suppose that Gluck wanted to run away with the money belonging to his partner. Would he take the trouble to travel over a thousand miles and come almost to his partner's door to do it?"

Ora paused and looked at Tom.

"I should not think he would," Tom replied.

"Of course not; it seems unreasonable."

"Then you think he never intended to defraud his partner?"

Ora laughed.

"I am not saying just what he intended to do," he said. "What I wanted to show was the improbability of his coming all the way from Colorado to Rockville in order to find a chance to run away with the money."

"Bless my soul! I believe you are a detective," laughed Tom. "You have a way of getting at the bottom of things that interests me."

"Now look here," said Ora, "do you really mean that, or are you joking?"

"I am in dead earnest. I never was more so in my life."

"Thank you. That is a compliment, and it encourages me. I have never discussed this with any living soul, and I was afraid that all my deductions might look like the merest moonshine to others. But I have not yet come to the most important point. You may have heard that Gluck left a valise at the hotel."

"Yes; what became of it?"

"It is in the hands of the marshal."

"Have you seen it?"

"Yes and made an examination of the contents."

"What were they?"

"Some wearing apparel, and a few other articles."

"No papers of any kind?"

"No; there was not a scrap of writing. The valise was one of those cheap telescopes, and the few articles of clothing were of a cheap quality."

"It is not likely that the money was carried in the valise."

"I think not. I have taken the trouble to post myself on every point possible. Now, when Gluck received the money it appears that it was all paid to him in currency, and there is no record of his having bought a draft for the amount or consigned it to any express company. Doesn't it look rather strange that he would risk carrying such an amount with him in currency?"

"It does."

"That is the way it looked to me. It looks as if he had had an object in doing what he did."

"Then you think he really intended to keep his partner's share?"

"In the absence of any other reason I should say he did."

"But you think there was some other object?"

"You will remember that it was suspected that he might hae lost his reason, and in that case there is no telling what he would do."

"Why, to be sure," said Tom. "That would account for anything."

CHAPTER XIV.

"And yet," Ora continued, "I do not think Mortimer Gluck was any more insane than you or I."

Tom looked puzzled.

"I must confess that I hardly know what you are driving at," he said.

"I shall explain it all presently," Ora went on. "By inquiry I have discovered several facts that have a bearing on the case. One of these is that Mortimer Gluck and Silas Baker had been in correspondence while Gluck was in Colorado. That is No. 1. No. 2 is the discovery that Silas Baker is in the habit of going to Dodsvale, a very small village five miles north of here. I made careful inquiries and could find no reason for his trips there at first. He had bought nothing, nor had he brought anything there to sell. The only business he did transact was the dropping of a letter in the postoffice. Why should he go six miles to mail a letter when he might mail it at the office here in Rockville? To whom was the letter directed? That I could not find out. Now I shall try to connect all of these discoveries with something I think to be the solution of the matter. I spoke of a valise brought here by Gluck and left at the hotel. That valise was never brought here by Gluck!"

"What makes you think that?" Tom asked in surprise.

"Because it was bought at my father's store less than a month before it was left at the hotel."

"By George! that is a surprising discovery!" exclaimed Tom. "How did you find it out?"

"By the cost mark—my father's—which I put on it myself."

"Then how do you account for it being brought there. Was it left at the hotel by some party who took Gluck's instead?"

"No; Mortimer Gluck never came to this hotel. The man who came here and registered as Mortimer Gluck and left the valise was Silas Baker!"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Tom. "Can this be true, or are you only joking?"

"I am speaking what I believe to be the truth."

"But what reasons can you have for such belief?"

"I have many reasons."

"But would not Baker be known here?"

"Not if he were disguised."

"That is true. But what object could he have?"

"We will come to that presently. I made an examination of the register and find that the supposed signature of Mortimer Gluck was in the handwriting of Silas Baker."

"Well, I'll declare! How did you find that out?"

"By some samples of Baker's writing in a note he sent to the store regarding some

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75 Prizes of 100 Shares each, total par value	7,500
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The single condition is that each estimate must be accompanied by an order for 50 shares or more of stock at the present low rate of 15 cents per share, and that the estimate must be received before November 1. Prizes will be awarded as soon as the official returns are in. The

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are located in the heart of the great **IDAHO GOLD FIELDS** from which has been taken $160,000,000 of placer gold alone. The rich ledges of the Mammoth and Great Eastern and Union Groups are now being developed, and the ore is strictly free-milling. The company owns these two great groups of claims, a total of 14 claims, each 600x1500 feet, with every requisite for the cheap mining and milling of ore. Shafts have been sunk and several tunnels made. Assays made range from $13.87 to $3758.19 to ton of ore. The lowest mill run averages $[illegible] per ton on the plates [illegible] A new 50-ton mill will reduce the total cost of reduction to less than $2 per ton, leaving a [illegible] which will be vastly increased by progressive development [illegible] bodies. **The possibilities of the Mammoth and Great Eastern properties are almost boundless.**

It is now proposed to sink a shaft on the new property [illegible] feet, blocking out as large a body as possible, also to install a mill at [illegible] day capacity and to commence to produce bullion before January 1 [illegible] poses, and for the development of all the company's mines, only 100,000 shares of Treasury Stock is now offered at

FIFTEEN CENTS PER SHARE

To dispose of all this Treasury Stock quickly at this extremely low figure the additional inducement of prizes as [illegible] above is offered

An order for 50 shares at 15 cents $ 7.50 entitles the purchaser to 5 guesses
An order for 100 shares at 15 cents $ 15.00 entitles the purchaser to 10 guesses
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An order for 500 shares at 15 cents $ 75.00 entitles the purchaser to 50 guesses
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The contest closes November 1. After that date the price of stock will be advanced 33⅓ per cent, and no further prizes will be offered.

Remember that the mines of the Mammoth and Great Eastern Mining and Milling Company are not mere prospects, but proven producers. They are backed by sterling business men who make this extraordinary offer because they want to sell the stock direct to investors without the aid of fiscal agents and other expensive middlemen.

STARTLING FIGURES

[illegible] less than two years ago is now worth $8, [illegible] with like [illegible]

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[illegible] business in Chatham, William [illegible] J. R. Battisby, Treas[illegible] the leading Presbyterian [illegible] Mill Co., Ltd., and Mr. Manson Camp[illegible] Absolutely Safe Investment. Not One Chance to Lose. A Million Chances to Win. [illegible] prompt action [illegible] this stock will positively advance on November 1st. [illegible] accompanied by [illegible] direct to the company or to the Bank of Montreal, Chatham, Ontario, Canada. Full particulars FREE. Write at once for illustrated booklet giving views, maps and valuable facts and figures.

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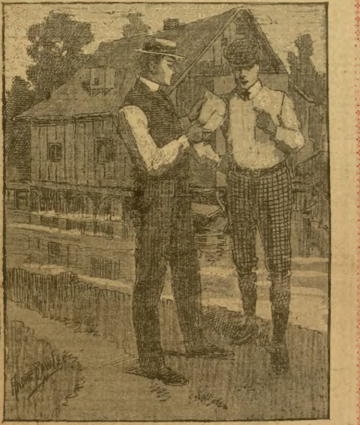
vegetables he had sent in to sell. My theory is that Baker put up the whole scheme with Gluck to swindle Larkin out of his share of the money received for the mine. It is true that Gluck might have taken the money and skipped out and said nothing, but he would have been searched for, and probably caught. As it is, the whole matter is a puzzle to every one, and while the detectives are looking for Gluck or searching for his body here at Rockville, he may be living in security two thousand miles away. You see, the very idea that he would come so far to meet his partner is regarded as proof of his honesty. The fact that he is supposed to have been mentally unbalanced when he arrived at the hotel might easily account for his disappearance."

He paused for a moment to examine some notes he had made in a small book. Tom waited in breathless silence for him to continue.

"There isn't much more to be said," continued Ora. "The fact that Baker had been in communication with Gluck for some time before the latter's supposed arrival in Rockville goes to prove that there was ample opportunity to have hatched the scheme that appears to have been carried out between the two. I have no doubt that Baker is corresponding with Gluck—who doubtless goes under an assumed name—and thus manages to keep him posted as to what is being done here. Knowing that he may be watched, Baker goes to Dodsvale to mail his letters. There remains only one more step to be taken now, and that is to find out the name and address of the party Baker is writing to and we shall have the mysterious Mortimer Gluck cornered! What do you think of it?"

He leaned back in his chair and looked at Tom.

Tom held out his hand.



Ora handed a slip of paper to Tom.

"What do I think of it?" he cried. "Ora, you are a genius!"

Ora made a protesting gesture.

"Don't say that," he implored. "Don't raise my hopes to so high a pitch. I am mortally afraid the whole thing shall burst as a bubble and leave me but a fool for my pains. Before you pass final judgment let us see what the outcome will be. I have seen the postmaster at Dodsvale and he has promised to keep a lookout for Baker's next letter and take down the name and address of the envelope. The postmaster is an old friend of my father's, and he will do this to oblige me, as I have assured him that I thought Baker was up to some crookedness. I have just found out that Baker went away from home today, and went in the direction of Dodsvale. If he should go there and drop another letter in the office, we shall have the matter in our hands. I have not told my father anything about my discoveries for the reason that should I do so he would probably forbid me doing anything further. He would be opposed to my appearing in the role of detective, for he would think me a mere boy, foolish to do so. I have longed to confide in some one and get an opinion, but till I met you I could think of no one that I felt like trusting. I know you will keep my secret, and if all my theories fail, no one excepting ourselves will be the wiser."

"I shall not mention it to any one," said Tom. "That you may know how much I am interested in what you have been telling me, and why I have every reason for keeping what you have told me a secret, I have a confession to make. You will remember that I told you I had some business to look after here. I have told no one what that business is, for it is necessary for me to keep it a secret. But now I not only have nothing to lose by telling you what it is, but much to gain, for you can do for me probably what I could never have done for myself. It will doubtless surprise you to know that I was sent here by Mr. Larkin to work on the Gluck case."

Ora sprang to his feet and grasped Tom's hand.

"Oh, Tom, how glad I am!" he cried. "Now we can work on the case together. Won't that be fine? I have just been dying to have some one go into the case with me. And just to think that you are a detective!"

Tom laughed heartily.

"But I am not a detective," he declared.

"Not a detective? Why, you said you were here to work on the case of Gluck."

"But I am not a detective for all that," Tom continued. Then he told Ora in a few words how it happened that Mr. Larkin had come to employ him.

"I was indeed lucky to make your acquaintance at the very start," Tom continued. "Without your aid I should have been perfectly at sea."

"But all my theories may come to naught," replied Ora. "You must not forget that."

"I am not going to think anything of the kind," Tom averred. "I firmly believe you are on the right track, and I want you to go on with your work. I am ready to help you in any way possible."

"All right. We can soon prove whether I have been right or wrong. Suppose we drive over to Dodsvale this evening and see if the postmaster has anything for us?"

"Capital! I am ready to start at any moment."

CHAPTER XV.

"We will go down to the store and get my buggy and start at once," said Ora.

As the pair left the hotel they saw Peter Funk sitting in the office.

"Can it be possible that he is here at work on the Gluck case?" asked Tom as they left the hotel.

"I hardly think so," replied Ora. "But I'd give a good deal to know just what he is here for."

As the boys drove out of town Tom said:

"There is one thing that puzzles me. When Mr. Larkin decided to send me here he said that he heard that some person resembling the missing Gluck had been seen in the vicinity of the Baker place. Mr. Larkin had this information from the town marshal, and that was one of his reasons for sending me to Rockville. Have you heard anything of the matter?"

"Yes; I talked with the marshal about it, and he was quite positive that Gluck had come back and was hiding somewhere in this locality. The details of the matter would seem to point to such a conclusion in absence of contradictory information.

"From what I could learn it appears that a stranger answering to the description of Mortimer Gluck, was seen passing along a dim path in the woods not far from the Baker place. He disappeared into an unfrequented place and nothing more was seen of him. Not long afterward—a half hour or such a matter—Silas Baker was seen coming from the same patch of woods. Now the theory of the marshal was that Baker had been to meet Gluck. Baker was carrying a small valise when seen."

"Was anything seen of the stranger afterward?"

"It seems not."

"Did the marshal search for him?"

"Yes, but with the result I fully expected. He saw nothing of the stranger, nor could he get the slightest trace of him."

"Do you think it could have been Gluck come back?"

"Not at all. The stranger was none other than Silas Baker in disguise."

"Well, did you ever!" cried Tom. "Look

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here, Ora, I shall soon believe you are a veritable seer. Of course it must have been Baker. If it were he who registered at the hotel, why not he in the last instance?"

"That's the way it struck me. Baker had his disguise in that valise he was carrying. It is all very simple when one finds the combination."

"What could have been Baker's object?"

"He probably knows that he is being watched, and this little game was played to mystify the officers. It will keep them from looking elsewhere for Gluck and help destroy all chances of his whereabouts being discovered. You see, Baker can afford to play with the fellows who are shadowing him. He has been guilty of no crime that can be proved on him, and he can afford to play with them. Then it might distract attention from his correspondence with Gluck."

"Well, I guess there is no doubt that you have got the whole matter worked out. Why, there isn't one detective in a dozen could have accomplished half what you have."

"You must not forget that I have been working on this case for a long time," replied Ora, "and I have had the advantage of being on the ground all the time."

Dodsvale was an exceedingly small place. It contained less than a dozen residences, one store where the postoffice was kept, and a blacksmith shop and a mill.

The boys stopped at the mill, and while Tom was letting the horse drink at the stream, Tom walked up the hill to the postoffice.

Tom could not help feeling thàt he had been exceedingly lucky in making the acquaintance of Ora.

"Knowing nothing of all he has told me," he thought, "I should have made exceedingly slow progress. But good fortune seems to have favored me ever since I left Millville."

It looked now as if the whole mystery surrounding the disappearance of Mortimer Gluck might be solved in a few days.

Within fifteen minutes Ora returned from the postoffice. There was a look of satisfaction on his face as he climbed into the buggy.

Neither spoke a word till they had left the town behind.

Then Ora drew a slip of paper from his pocket and handed it to Tom. This is all it contained:

"M. Grove, Deep Gulch, Wyoming."

Tom uttered a cry of delight.

"The postmaster gave you this?" he asked.

"Yes; that is our man."

"What shall we do next?"

"I hardly know. We might write out there and put the officers onto him, and in that way we could soon learn if he is really the man we want."

"That would take too long," said Tom. "Now that we have got him located in all probability, we ought to act at once. We might wire to the sheriff to arrest and hold him. You see, he might take it into his head to leave there at any moment."

"You are right. While I am satisfied in my own mind that this M. Grove, of Deep Gulch, is the missing Mortimer Gluck, there is always the possibility of a mistake to reckon with."

"What we need now," said Tom, "is the advice of some one who knows how to proceed in such cases as this."

"That is right. But whom can we trust?"

"The local officers, I suppose, would be the proper ones to consult."

"Yes, but I'd like for us to have the advice of Mr. Larkin first. Suppose we wire him to come up?"

"The very thing. He lives three miles from Tipton, but the message can be sent out to his place by special messenger."

"Then let us do that as soon as we get back to Rockville."

"The message will not be delivered till tomorrow morning now, as it will be half-past eight before we could get it through, but that will not delay his arrival, as he cannot leave there till tomorrow anyway."

It was half-past seven when they arrived in Rockville. Tom went to the telegraph office at once and sent the message.

About eight o'clock Ora joined Tom at the hotel.

The question that now engaged their thoughts was how to provide against any chance of losing trace of the supposed Gluck, now that he had been located.

"I'll tell you what we'd better do," said Tom, "and that is, wire the sheriff or some other officer of the law at Deep Gulch to shadow M. Grove, as he is probably wanted here. That will give us time to consult with Mr. Larkin."

"A capital idea," agreed Ora, so the telegram was written and they went over to the telegraph office with it.

It was now past eight, and the message was sent at the night rate.

"It will get there in good time, anyway," said Tom as they left the office, "and we have saved half the cost. It is not likely that Mr. M. Grove will leave the place immediately, as Baker has addressed a letter to him there."

"That's right," nodded Ora. "There is one thing that makes me more positive that Grove is Gluck. You will notice that the initials of the two names are the same."

"Why, so they are," said Tom.

"Some people dislike to change their initials, and above all their first name. It is likely that the M Stands for Mortimer. You see, it is awkward to respond to a new name, and if one retains his given name it doesn't matter so much."

The next morning Tom said to Ora:

"I think I'll go back to my uncle's and stay till tomorrow. Mr. Larkin cannot arrive before that time, anyway, and there may be something for me to do at Dark Hollow."

"Then I'll drive you out," said Ora, "and in the meantime I'll keep my eyes on the situation of things here, and if anything turns up I'll come out on the double quick and let you know."

When Tom arrived at Dark Hollow he found his uncle sitting on the porch.

"I am glad you came," he said to Tom. "I think we might as well commence at once. I can't give much assistance just yet, but I can hobble around and tell you the places I have already searched."

The reader will find in next week's issue of the Ledger further chapters of this thrilling story. Cameras and patterns are still being given free to subscribers. See pages thirteen and fifteen.

* * *

MARY AND HER MULE.

Mary had a little mule;
  Its feet were never slow,
And everywhere that Mary went
  The mule was sure to go.

It followed her to school one day,
  Which was against the rule—
(However, this contrary way
  Is noticed in each mule).

It made the children laugh and shout
  To see him wag his ears
And innocently look about
  At all the little dears.

The teacher tried to send him forth—
  She struck him once, that's all;
The teacher then soared east by north
  And tore out half the wall.

The pupils shouted loud at that—
  His Muleship did not stop,
But old and young and thin and fat
  He kicked out of the shop.

But Mary, gentle little soul,
  Escaped into the yard
With skin and bones and garments whole—
  The mule, he was her pard.

And then the mule in lively glee
  Swung wildly with each hoof
And in a spreading chestnut tree
  Deposited the roof.

Continuing, he kicked the books
  And desks and wall and floor
Until the distant forest nooks
  The schoolhouse debris wore.

Sweet peace then settled on the scene,
  And from the county line
The teacher's voice came, quite serene:
  "I think I shall resign."

Why did the mule love Mary so?
  Why, Mary was real kind;
She also knew his traits, you know,
  And never stood behind.

* * *

HIS LETTER.

Mr. Kennicott left Chicago some five months ago for a six weeks' trip. His wife hung about him at parting.

"Now, Henry," she besought him, "do write home once in a while. Yes, I know you send telegrams every day or so, but I simply hate the mean old things, for they scare me to death every time a boy brings one. I can't help thinking there is some horrible accident just happened to you, and a letter is so much nicer, even if you do have to write them. Now, be good."

"I will be good, Delia," vowed Mr. Kennicott, brokenly. "I will write you at least one long letter while I am away, and perhaps others. And I will send a short note every little while. But I shall be busy, you understand, and you must not expect too much, especially as you know how I hate 'em—letters, I mean."

So Mrs. Kennicott watched her spouse duck his head as he entered the waiting cab, with some slight hope tugging at her heart. Henry was not a willful liar, and she built largely on the promised letter as the days sped by.

But nothing save telegrams and curt notes materialized. Mr. Kennicott invariably telegraphed his safe arrival at every town on his route and once in a while wrote some such letter as this:

"Dear Delia and Children: Am very busy, but in excellent health. Glad to hear you are enjoying same up to 14th inst. Draw on Fordham for any needed funds.

"HENRY."

It is needless to say that such a specimen of epistolary art did not satisfy the loving heart and brimming soul of his wife. She is wise in her generation and has learned to perfection the gentle art of silence, but toward the end of Mr. Kennicott's stay she wrote to him in gently reproachful strain, reminding him of that long letter, long promised. In reply she received this:

"Dear Delia: Do not understand situation. Find this entry in diary under date of 3d inst.: 'Wrote long letter to Delia, describing horrors of Springdale wreck, from which I mercifully escaped last night.' shall send tracer. With love, HENRY."

It is needless to say that this communication threw Mrs. Kennicott into cold chills of acute fear over a danger long passed. She had read particulars of the dreadful Springdale wreck two weeks before, without the slightest suspicion that her beloved spouse had been within shouting distance of danger. Evidently Henry had let that long and surely lost letter do the work of his customary telegram when he reached a new halting point, for she did not even know that he had been in Springdale. So, with her anxiety and curiosity, she made the life of the patient postman on her route a pain to him for the rest of the time her husband was away. She wanted above all things to read that letter.

When Mr. Kennicott came home the wreck was the sole topic of conversation for days—and that letter. Mrs. Kennicott went carefully through the lining of his suit case to ascertain that it was not in hiding and finally she told Mr. Kennicott she doubted him. But he was ready with such profuse detail as to place and circumstance of writing that she finally settled down into the hopeless belief that the only long letter her man of affairs and telegrams probably would ever write to her was irretrievably lost. It finally came to pass that no detail of that wreck could be brought up in the Kennicott household without Mr. Kennicott observing placidly: "Yes, I wrote you all about that in my long letter." And at such reminder Mrs. Kennicott invariably sighed.

Three days ago the postman rang the bell and waited especially for Mrs. Kennicott. When she came to the door he handed her a much-postmarked and blistery envelope. "Is this it?" he asked with hope in his voice. Mrs. Kennicott grabbed the letter and said it was it, and he must wait and have a glass of lemonade. She sent the reward out by Tommy Kennicott and sat down to read in luxurious peace. This was the letter:

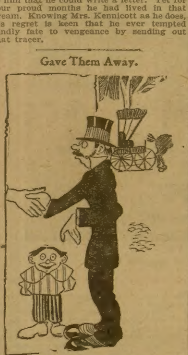
"Dear Wife: Came to Springdale from Dover via E. & S. Bad wreck this side of D., caused by head-on-collision with freight. Many hurt, some seriously. I escaped uninjured, thankful to say. Many sad scenes among the injured. Assisted as I could. Engineer killed and engine badly damaged. Several cars derailed. Do not be alarmed, as the danger is past and I am giving you full details. Business was good and promises to be fair here, though town is excited. With love to the children, yours,

"HENRY."

Mr. Kennicott listened to his letter that evening and when his wife's acid voice ceased he wondered how it had ever seemed to him that he could write a letter. Yet for four proud months he had lived in that dream. Knowing Mrs. Kennicott as he does, his regret is keen that he ever tempted kindly fate to vengeance by sending out that tracer.

* * *

Gave Them Away.



Rev. Dr. Thirdly—Ah! that was a fine dinner, Brother Jones. I don't often get such a good meal as that.

Little Buster Jones—Neither do we.

* * *

A Debtor's Tiger.

A. Mervyn Smith says in his recently published book: "Snakes and hyenas are strange pets, but strangest of all is a full-grown tiger, and such a pet had Major Mansell-Pleydell. It used to be chained up just in front of the door of his bungalow.

"The Major had a method of running up bills with local tradesmen, but there was great difficulty in getting payment, as none of the bill collectors was venturesome enough to cross the guardian at the door. It was a great joke of the Major's when asked to pay his bill to reply: 'Have you sent your bill? Your man has never presented it at my house.'

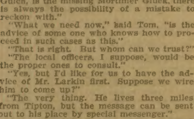
"Brutus, as the tiger was named, seemed to know what was required of him. When chained before his master's door he would lie with his head between his forepaws and watch the gate. If a stranger entered he would lift his head and breathe heavily, and this was enough to scare the most venturesome bill collectors."

* * *

Why the Baby Cried.

Mother—Frank, what is the baby crying about?

Frank—I guess because I took his cake and showed him how to eat it.



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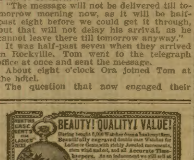

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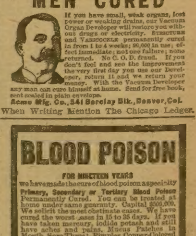

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Roosevelt and the Bear.

In his book on President Roosevelt Jacob Riis tells how his hero once killed a grizzly bear. He had made his camp "by the side of a small, noisy brook with crystal water," and had strolled off with his rifle to see if he could pick up a grouse for supper, when he came upon the grizzly and wounded it. It took refuge in a laurel thicket, where Roosevelt laid siege to it. While he was cautiously skirting the edge, peering in, in the gathering dusk, the bear suddenly came out on the hillside. "Scarlet strings of froth hung from his lips; his eyes burned like embers in the gloom." Roosevelt fired, and the bullet shattered the point of the grizzly's heart. "Instantly the great bear turned with a harsh roar of fury and challenge, blowing the bloody foam from his mouth, so that I saw the gleam of his white fangs; and then he charged straight at me, crashing and bounding through the laurel bushes, so that it was hard to aim.

"I waited," says Roosevelt, "until he came to a fallen tree, raking him as he topped it with a ball which entered his chest and went through the cavity of his body, but he neither swerved nor flinched, and at the moment I did not know that I had struck him. He came steadily on, and in another second was almost upon me. I fired for his forehead, but my bullet went low, entering his open mouth, smashing his lower jaw and going into his neck. I leaped to one side almost as I pulled the trigger, and through the hanging smoke the first thing I saw was the paw as he made a vicious side blow at me. The rush of his charge carried him past.

"As he struck he lurched forward, leaving a pool of bright blood where his muzzle hit the ground; but he recovered himself and made two or three jumps onward, while I hurriedly jammed a couple of cartridges into the magazine—my rifle holding only four, all of which I had fired. Then he tried to pull up, but as he did so his muscles seemed suddenly to give way, his head drooped and he rolled over and over like a shot rabbit. Each of my first three bullets had inflicted a mortal wound."

Clark and the Book Agent.

Senator W. A. Clark detests nothing more than to be interrupted when busy. One day he was in his office engrossed in a business conversation when a petite woman carrying a black bag entered. With a compelling smile and an insinuating manner she approached the surly millionaire. Utterly insensible to his repellant mood and indifferent to his abrupt manner she drew from the depths of the bag a handsomely bound volume, the merits and beauties of which she began to eloquently descant upon.

Failing to embarrass her with arctic frigidity and impatient at her persistence under rebuffs all but vulgar he turned suddenly upon the chattering woman and asked:

"Madame, do you know what my time is worth?"

She confessed it was a conundrum.

"Well," he said, petulantly, "it's worth $30 an hour!"

He turned away with the air of one who had settled the matter definitely beyond any further controversy. But he didn't know the woman.

"Oh, I'm so grateful to you, Mr. Clark," she replied with a tone of pathos in her voice. "Thirty dollars an hour, did you say?"

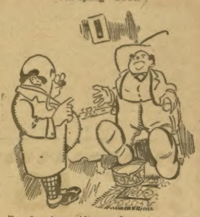
"Yes; that's what I said, and it's cheap at that," and he smiled cynically.

"Oh, I know it is dirt cheap," she chirruped with winsome blytheness. "I am so glad you told me——" rummaging in her reticule, from which she quickly fished out a purse gorged with currency. Moving near to the astonished millionaire, who now regarded her movements with unfeigned curiosity, she counted two bills, a ten and a five, off the roll. These she pushed along the top of the sloping desk toward him and said: "Yes, I'm glad you told me, because I hadn't expected to get it so cheap. There is $15. Now, I want a half hour of your uninterrupted attention while I talk to you about this book."

Clark pushed back the money and subscribed and paid for two copies of the book.

Mrs. George H. Beckwith of Denver has presented the town of Bennettsville, S. C., with a handsome public school building.

Galloping Gout.



Dr. Quackem—Ah, my dear sir, it's the gout you have. It's an insidious disease—it kills a man by inches.

Mr. Hiliver—Inches! Ouch! It's killing me foot by foot.

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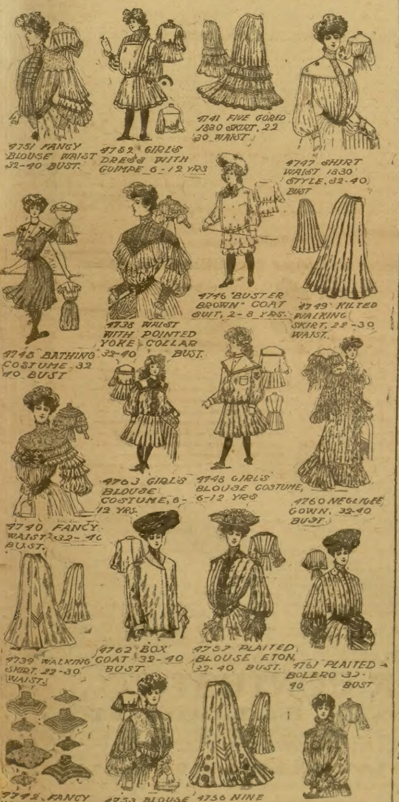
The patterns shown below are furnished us by one of the best, if not the best, pattern manufacturers in New York. They comprise the very latest styles, and are unequalled for accuracy in fit, simplicity in use, and are most economical of material. They sell from the stores from twenty-five to fifty cents each. Full instructions are printed on every pattern. Three months' subscription to the CHICAGO LEDGER for 25 cents and any TWO of these patterns FREE. Six months' subscription to the CHICAGO LEDGER for 50 cents and FIVE of these patterns FREE. This offer is without equal. If you are wise you will take advantage of it at once.

REMEMBER, to avoid mistakes, you must first give the number of the Pattern wanted—second, do not fail to give bust measure for waist, or waist measure if skirt is desired. Unless you do as here stated we will not know what to send you. Also, do not fail to enclose money. PATTERN DEPT., CHICAGO LEDGER, CHICAGO, ILL.


4751 FANCY BLOUSE WAIST 32-40 BUST.
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4762 BOX COAT 32-40 BUST
4757 PLAITED BLOUSE ETON, 32-40 BUST.
4761 PLAITED BOLERO 32-40 BUST
4742 FANCY YOKES 32-36-40 BUST.
4753 BLOUSE WAIST WITH BOLERO 32-40 BUST
4756 NINE GORED SKIRT, 22-30 WAIST.
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Don't neglect the slightest sign of irregularity, but see that you have at least one natural, easy movement a day. Pills, salts and liquid physic are dangerous because they strain and weaken the bowels. What you want is a mild but sure tonic laxative, that tones and strengthens the bowels and helps their movements. Such a bowel medicine is CASCARETS, and when you try them, you will find that it is the easiest thing in the world to make and keep your bowels clean and regular, strong and healthy. By keeping the bowels clean, all serious disorders are prevented by CASCARETS. Sample box, 10c. *Month's treatment 50c.* Sample and booklet free. Address Sterling Remedy Co., Chicago or New York. 481

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GENTLEMEN: I would like to be your agent. I agree to pay you for all papers I sell, less my commission. I also agree to report every week. Please send me a bundle of papers, report blanks, etc. Yours truly,

Name..

Street.............................. *Town*..............................

Date.............................. *State*..............................

Extra Good Soldiers.

Robert, a 4-year-old American citizen, recently went a-visiting in a big fort, where he was entertained nobly by officers and men. One day he was taken in state to see a drill on the parade ground, and just as he got there the line was standing immovably at "Attention!"

Robert's acquaintance with soldiers had been intimate, but not wide, having been gained entirely from the tin soldiers in the box which was presented to him for his birthday. Therefore he promptly noticed a great and surprising difference between the soldiers on the parade ground and those at home, and he expressed it solemnly and in a shrill voice that reached the ranks.

"Them's extra good soldiers, I guess!" remarked he. "They don't fall down at all, does they?"

Peculiar Eyes in Animals.

There are many animals that possess more than two eyes which do not act together. A leech, for example, has ten eyes on the top of its head which do not work in concert, and a kind of marine worm has two eyes on the head and a row down each side of the body.

Some lizards have an extra eye on the top of the head which does not act with the other two.

A bee or wasp has two large compound eyes which possibly help each other, and are used for near vision, and also three little simple eyes on the top of the head which are employed for seeing things a long way off.

The Man for the Place.

Mr. Brown's little daughter, aged 10, accidentally swallowed a nickel. He sent his little son, aged 6, in great haste for the doctor.

The child soon returned with the doctor, and also the minister. His father met them at the gate, and, sending the men into the house, he kept his son outside and asked him why he had brought the minister.

"Papa," answered the little boy, "I heard you tell mamma last Sunday at dinner that this minister could beat any man you ever saw for getting money out of people."—Little Chronicle.

IT IS NOW OR NEVER!

Only a few days more and our wonderful contest will close. Have you entered it? If not, read this advertisement carefully and write to us immediately. Never before was the opportunity offered to win $25,000 in gold at a cost of 25c in a contest where your own skill in estimating determines the results. You may not win the first prize but the second prize is $10,000 and the third is $5,000, and even if you fail to get one of these great prizes, there are nearly two thousand smaller prizes, one of which you should surely win if you use a little care and judgment. **This is a contest of skill and brains in making estimates, not a lottery of chances.**

We are making the greatest offer ever made in the history of World's Fairs. It is perfectly fair, perfectly legal, simply a contest of skill and calculation wherein the chances of all are equal—no favoritism, no possibility of collusion or unfairness from any source.

This Contest Closes October 15th,

Six weeks before the Great St. Louis World's Fair closes. Not a certificate will be sold or a penny accepted after October 15th. We are offering

$85,500.00 IN GOLD

to those who estimate nearest to the total paid attendance at the Great St. Louis World's Fair.

The largest prizes ever offered in any contest, and are divided as follows:

To the nearest correct estimate	$25,000.00
To the second nearest correct estimate	10,000.00
To the third nearest correct estimate	5,000.00
To the fourth nearest correct estimate	2,500.00
To the fifth nearest correct estimate	1,500.00
To the sixth nearest correct estimate	1,000.00
To the next 10 nearest correct estimates, $200 each	2,000.00
To the next 20 nearest correct estimates, $100 each	2,000.00
To the next 50 nearest correct estimates, $50 each	2,500.00
To the next 100 nearest correct estimates, $25 each	2,500.00
To the next 200 nearest correct estimates, $10 each	2,000.00
To the next 500 nearest correct estimates, $5 each	2,500.00
To the next 1,000 nearest correct estimates, $1 each	1,000.00
Supplementary prizes	26,000.00
Total	$85,500.00

We give you figures absolutely free, which will assist you to arrive at an average daily paid attendance upon which to base your estimate of the total paid attendance at the entire Fair. We also give you the total paid attendance at other Fairs and the OFFICIAL reports of the paid attendance at the St. Louis Fair up to the very last moment that the figures are obtainable from the Fair management.

The total paid attendance at the Chicago World's Fair was 21,480,141, at the Buffalo Pan-American Exposition 5,306,859 and at the Omaha Exposition 1,778,250.

The paid attendance on April 30th, Opening Day of the St. Louis World's Fair was 125,754, the paid attendance for the month of May was 542,028 and for the month of June 1,382,863, etc., etc.

Write us for further reports. The St. Louis Fair opened April 30th, and will close December 1st, 1904, and you are to estimate the total paid attendance at the entire Fair. Can you do it? You have just as much chance as any one else.

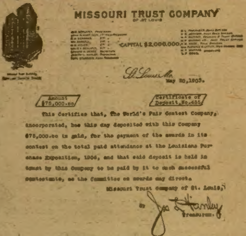
Estimates 25c Each. 5 for $1.00. Lower Rates on Larger Quantities Given Below.

For every estimate you are given a separate engraved and numbered certificate with coupons attached. These certificates are not lots or chances, but are simply certificates of membership showing that you are entitled to make one estimate for each certificate you hold. The more certificates you purchase the more estimates you can make. The surest way to win one of the large prizes is to purchase a large number of certificates and make a great many estimates. These certificates will cost you 25 cents each or 5 for $1.00. Or we will send them to you as low as 12½ cents each if you purchase as many as 40 at one time. An investment of a small amount may mean your independence for life. You have just as much chance as any one else to win a fortune, and it is to your interest and to your family's to take advantage of the opportunity as soon as possible.

You are not placing your orders with an unreliable concern. The money to cover our prizes is on deposit. See statement of one of the largest banks in the United States herewith. In entering a contest, this should be your first consideration. Know that the money to pay you is where you can get it without delay or question as soon as the prizes are awarded. We are incorporated for $200,000.00, and our company is made up of the most influential business men and capitalists.

We cannot touch this prize money. It is held by the Missouri Trust Co. for no other purpose than to pay these prizes as soon as the committee on awards declares the successful contestants. This committee has no interest whatever in the contest, and is made up of prominent business men who have agreed to award the prizes, and your estimates are turned over to this committee long before the Fair closes.

Your estimates must reach us by October 15. We will simply sell you the certificates with duplicate coupons attached, and allow you the privilege of filling in your own estimates on the certificates and coupons whenever you are ready, and of sending in the coupons to us on the very last day of the contest if you wish. That is, you do not have to make your estimate NOW, but you can buy your certificates NOW, and hold them yourself up to the last day of the contest, when you will know what the total attendance is up to that date, then fill in your estimates and send the coupons to us just so they are received in our office by not later than October 15, 1904, the date on which the contest closes. The World's Fair opened April 30, 1904, and closes December 1, 1904, showing that the closing date of the contest is at least six weeks prior to the closing date of the Fair, insuring absolute fairness to every participant in the contest.



MISSOURI TRUST COMPANY
OF ST. LOUIS

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May 20, 1903.

Amount
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Certificate of
Deposit No. 466

This Certifies that, The World's Fair Contest Company, incorporated, has this day deposited with this Company $75,000.00 in gold, for the payment of the awards in its contest on the total paid attendance at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, 1904, and that said deposit is held in trust by this Company to be paid by it to such successful contestants, as the Committee on awards may direct.

Missouri Trust Company of St. Louis,
by Jos. L. Hanley
Treasurer.

Is not this indeed a wonderful offer? Did you ever hear of a Contest where the conditions were so simple and the terms so liberal? Look carefully over the list of prizes, and you will readily see that if you fail to win the first or second or even the third prize, you still have an opportunity to share in nearly two thousand other handsome prizes, any one of which is worth trying for.

The More COUPONS and CERTIFICATES you hold the greater your opportunities are of securing one or more of these grand prizes.

1 Certificate and Coupon will cost	25 cents
5 Certificates and Coupons will cost	$1.00
12 Certificates and Coupons will cost	2.00
20 Certificates and Coupons will cost	3.00
40 Certificates and Coupons will cost	5.00

The small sum of 25 cents or $1.00 or even $5.00 is of little value in itself. Can you find a better place to invest so small an amount than here, where your own skill and judgment has so much to do with the result and where it may bring you an independent fortune? You will never get this opportunity again and it is the last chance that you will ever have to enter the Contest.

There are thousands of poor people in the world today who can attribute their limited circumstances to one little instance of neglect. This is probably the opportunity of your life. Are you going to let it slip by you? It is not every day that an opportunity to gain $25,000 by the exercise of your own intelligence at a cost of 25 cents is laid at your door. Write today for full particulars. Don't think that "tomorrow will do as well." The habit of putting off till tomorrow grows on one until the day comes when he or she realizes that the opportunity is gone forever, while the more thoughtful neighbor acts promptly and gains the fortune which might as well have been yours. An investment of only a small amount may mean that a fortune is yours.

THE WORLD'S FAIR CONTEST CO.,

7150 Delmar Avenue, · St. Louis, Mo.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.—Bear in mind **That You Hold Your Own Certificates** and Coupons and that you do not have to make your estimates or fill in the Certificates and Coupons and send the coupons to us until the very last day of the Contest if you so desire. Remember also that this is the last chance you will have to buy certificates and coupons. Contestants are distinctly to understand that participation in this prize contest is not confined to subscribers for any one paper, but that the contest is being advertised in a large number of other publications, the subscribers for all of which are privileged to compete and share in the distribution of the prizes offered.

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